

DECEMBER 2023

AUSTRALIA

PLAYBOY

**FOR
THE
CAUSE**
THE
CALIFORNIA
BLACK
WOMEN'S
HEALTH
PROJECT

**DOPE
TUTOR**
WHY WEED
EXPUNGEMENTS
MATTER

**MORE
QUICKIES
PLEASE!**
HOW EDIBLES
EQUAL
ORGASMS

SOCIAL
BUTTERFLY

Susan Hoff

ISSN 0014-0139 (US) 0014-0139 (CAN) 0014-0139 (UK) 0014-0139 (AUS)



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PLAYBOY



Bella Thorne Can't Be Tamed

The former Disney star doesn't care what you think of her, and that's a beautiful thing

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **CHLOE AFTEL**

INTRODUCTION **THE PLAYBOY EDITORS**

"People often don't want to get to know the real you; they only want to get to know the person they think you are. For me, that means people are constantly trying to change me, every second of the day, especially on social media. I'm not fed up with social media—I understand it—but people like to comment on how my image is too edgy, that I'm too edgy, and on how they wish I looked. It's a lot of 'do this, don't do that.' To them I say, fuck off.

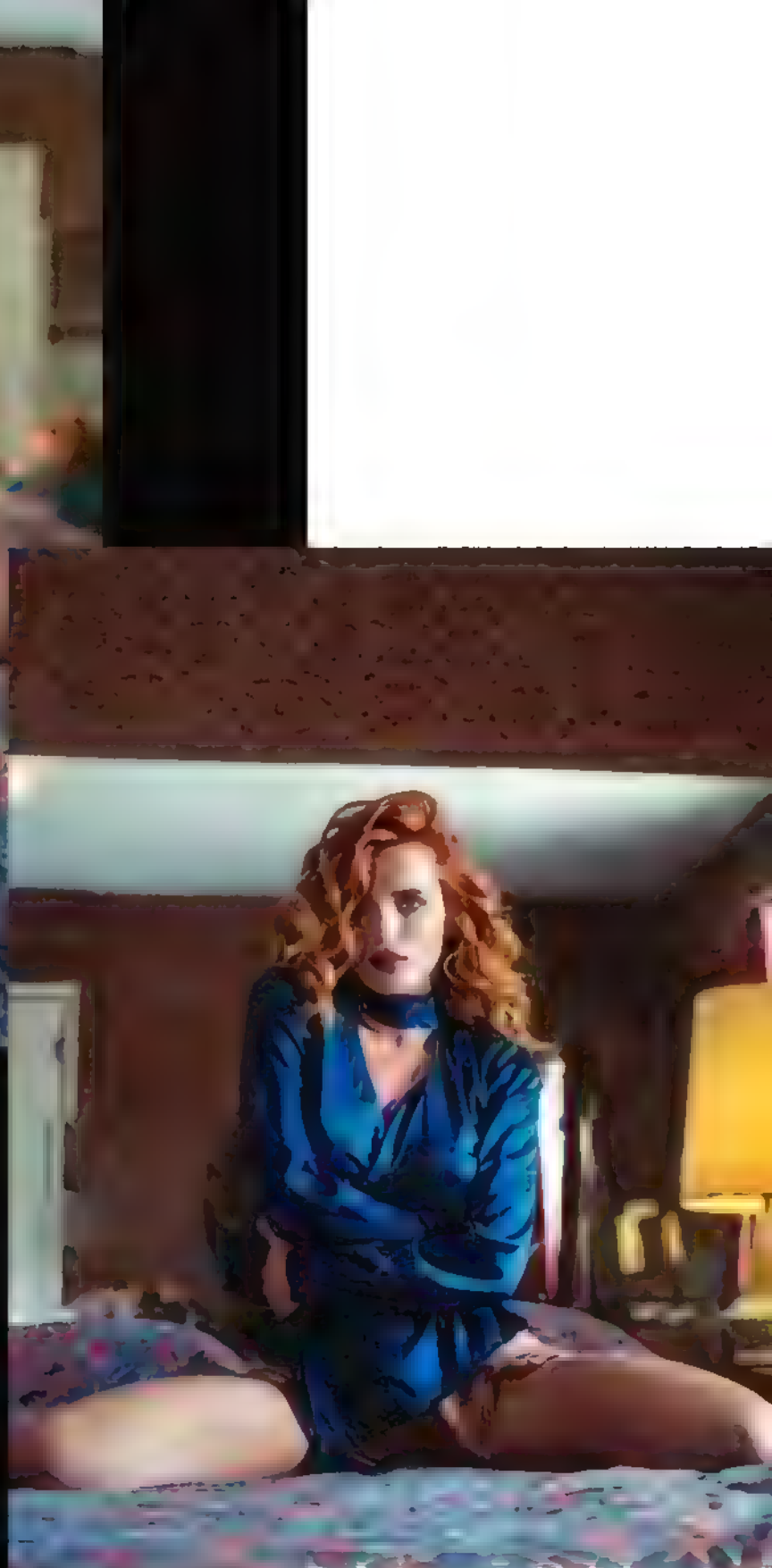
There's this effort to try to shame a woman's sexiness by pulling a cover over it, but I'm a woman who loves skin. I love skin on me, I love skin on girls, I love skin on guys. If you're confident enough to show off your body, you should. Be confident. It can be difficult to get yourself to focus on you all the time, especially when you're trying to transition into who you really are, but I'm not going to change for anybody else. I love staying true to me."





*"When I say
no, it makes
me feel good
at night."*







Fast-Acting Edibles Are Perfect for a Quickie

Feeling the weight of 2023?
Pump up sexy times with
rapid-response edibles, for a
more connected and orgas-
mic hookup

Everyone is struggling to find balance in this strange year. Covid fatigue has hit us hard—many of us feel cooped up, exhausted and stressed out. You know what alleviates stress? Orgasms. And what can enhance an orgasm? Cannabis.

For those of us who like to relax at the intersection of THC and sex, a recent development in the world of legal weed is changing the game: fast-acting edibles. In trying them out, along with a specialized journal to track and calibrate my sex-and-pot play, I've been happily broadening the borders of my pleasure.

According to Playboy's recent sex survey, people are having sex less often during the pandemic. A long, satisfying fuck seems like a lot of work in 2020. One solution: How about a quickie?

Speaking from recent experience, a fast bang with no foreplay can be exhilarating. Maybe one person climaxes. Maybe both. Maybe no one. Just investing a few minutes in each other's pleasure will spark an endorphin rush that will have you feeling better.

Adding weed to the equation can make things even hotter. Unsurprisingly, the Playboy sex survey found that the vast majority of respondents—75 percent—reported pairing sex with cannabis during lockdown. THC is a vasodilator, meaning it increases blood flow, so in addition to the euphoria or high you may feel from consuming cannabis, it can also enhance sexual pleasure. The new intimacy journal from Goldleaf outlines several ways to incorporate weed into your sex life and includes a log book. The idea is to document play and calibrate "couture stoned sex" experiences, as Sophie Saint Thomas, who co-developed the journal, explains in its foreword.

"When it comes to cannabis, there's not a one-size-fits-all model," Saint Thomas tells Playboy. "For me, it might be a 30 milligram edible taken an hour before sex. For someone else, it might be a joint they share with their partner after sex." As I was replaying my hot afternoon hookup in my head, I wondered what might best work for my own cannabis-enhanced quickie.

During the pandemic, I've been smoking way less weed than usual, instead using tinctures and edibles. But the long onset time of edibles usually rules them out as aids for spontaneous sex. Ingesting THC as an edible, rather than smoking or vaping it, creates a longer pathway to the brain, traveling through the digestive system and liver. It can take anywhere from 45 minutes to two hours to feel the effects of an edible, depending on your metabolism and tolerance.

Enter fast-acting edibles.

CannaCraft, a cannabis company based in Santa Rosa, California has a line of low-dose artisanal edibles under the label Satori. This year, Satori released fast-acting milk-chocolate-covered strawberries, each containing 3 milligrams of THC. An edible experience without the wait—how does that work? The nanotechnology the edibles use is commonly incorporated in vitamins and supplements, and reportedly improves the bioavailability of absorbed ingredients such as cannabis oil.

"Basically, it breaks down the cannabinoids into smaller molecules," CannaCraft brand manager Elise McDonough says. "When the edible hits your digestive system,



If you're nervous about getting overwhelmingly high, the significantly reduced onset time with low-dose edibles should allay some fears.

it 'tricks' your body into absorbing it faster." Those who indulge may feel the effects as soon as 10 minutes after eating a Satori strawberry.

CannaCraft's director of new product development Matt Elmes, who has a Ph.D. in molecular and cellular biology, says the effects of fast-acting edibles also wear off more rapidly than a classic weed brownie. "It's a typical pharmacology principle," he says. "The faster a drug starts to affect you, the faster it's going to go away. Usually within a couple hours, you'll feel a full return to normalcy."

Negative experiences with standard weed edibles are all too common. (Remember when Maureen Dowd thought she was dying after she ate too much infused chocolate?) If you're nervous about getting overwhelmingly high, the significantly reduced onset time with low-dose edibles should allay some fears. You'll feel the full effects quickly and can adjust your experience accordingly.

When I sampled the Satori strawberries, I felt the familiar, pleasant warmth of THC spreading through my system in minutes. For me it worked best on an empty stomach, taken with a little water. I generally prefer lower doses, so the 3 milligrams of THC per chocolate was ideal. When I wanted to feel more, I just popped another in my mouth.

This brings us back to the quickie. Weed has been linked to an increase in more satisfying, easier-to-reach orgasms. Even better, cannabis can make you feel more connected to your body, your impulses and your partner. The blissful melting feeling I get from weed, along with the rush of heat from wanting my lover to fuck me immediately is like Pop Rocks for the soul.

Last week, just as I was about to log on for a midday Zoom meeting, I got a "Can we reschedule?" email, right as I heard my lover finish a work call. The gold Satori tin glinted in the sun. I grabbed my favorite cannabis-infused lube, ate two strawberry bites and walked into his office (a.k.a. the kitchen) to offer him a piece. We were naked so fast it was funny—and by the time we were fucking a few minutes later, we were high too.





DELIGHTFUL

emi rei

Instagram @ms.emirei

Photography by @iseesexy.vegas









How do you like to begin your day? I kickstart my day with an invigorating routine including a steaming cup of hot coffee to awaken my senses, followed by a dedicated workout session and personal reflection. It's the perfect synergy of caffeine fuel, physical activity, and mental vitality setting a vibrant tone for my day.

How did you get started in the modeling industry?

What inspired you to become a model? The allure of the modeling world has always called to me and I responded with a mix of curiosity and passion. I would collect fashion magazines as a kid and cut out the photos to make vision boards, dreaming of one day becoming one of those girls. The journey has been a dynamic blend of self-discovery, artistic expression, and the pursuit of transforming imagination into reality. The inspiration to become a model stems from a deep fascination with visual storytelling. I see modeling as a blank canvas, allowing me to express sensuality, confidence, and the drawing essence of human form.

Best place you have ever been to in the world? Paris holds a special place in my heart as the best place I've ever experienced. The city's romantic appeal, the breathtaking view from the Eiffel Tower, and the art and culture at every turn made it an unparalleled journey. From strolls along the Seine to savoring delightful pastries in cozy cafes, every moment felt like a page from a dreamy story. The memories I created here with loved ones in this enchanting city truly made it the best place I've ever been to in the world.

What are some of your biggest dreams you hope to achieve? My primary dream revolves around making a positive impact on people's lives. Professionally this involves excelling in my modeling and contributing to meaningful projects. I aspire to be a role model by embodying qualities like determination, integrity, and kindness to inspire others to pursue their goals. On a personal level, I dreamed of cultivating a life filled with balance. This means nurturing significant relationships, maintaining a healthy lifestyle, and engaging in activities that bring joy and fulfillment. Ultimately, the combination of professional success, personal growth, and positively influencing others shapes my aspirations.

What does freedom of self-expression mean to you? Freedom of self-expression, to me, is the liberty to authentically convey my thoughts, emotions, and identity without fear of judgment. It is the ability to embrace and share my unique perspectives, ideas, and feelings, fostering a sense of individuality and openness in both personal and creative aspects of life.

How do you prepare physically and mentally for a photo shoot that will be seen by so many people? Physically, I prioritize by maintaining a healthy routine with regular exercise and proper nutrition to ensure I feel confident and energized. Mentally, I focus on mindfulness and positive visualization, channeling any nerves into excitement. Reminding myself of the creative process and the opportunity to share my authentic self helps build confidence for a successful and enjoyable photoshoot.

What are your favorite aspects of modeling and what challenges have you encountered along the way? My favorite aspects of modeling include the creative expression it allows and the opportunity to collaborate

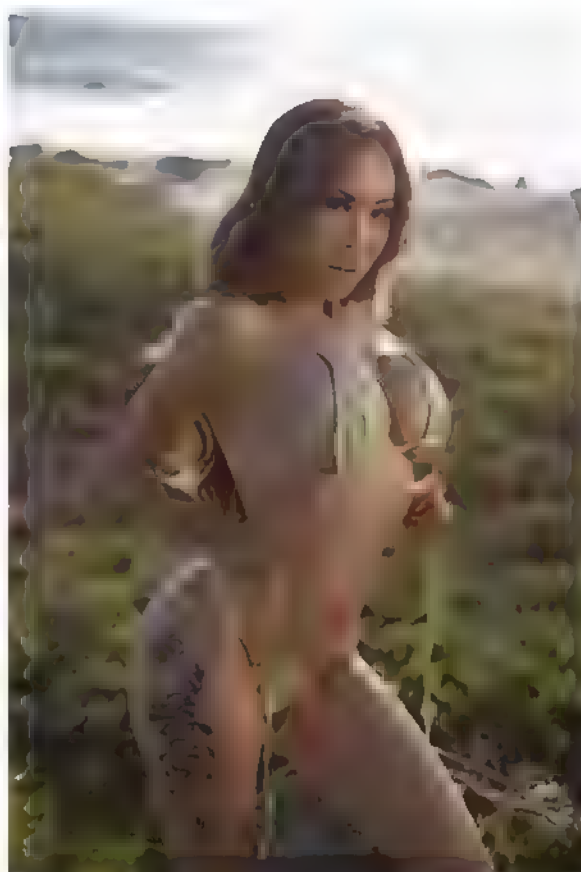
with talented individuals in the industry. The challenges often involve navigating stereotypes and external expectations and striving to redefine beauty standards. Overcoming these challenges has been empowering, contributing to my personal growth and a more inclusive and authentic representation within the modeling world.

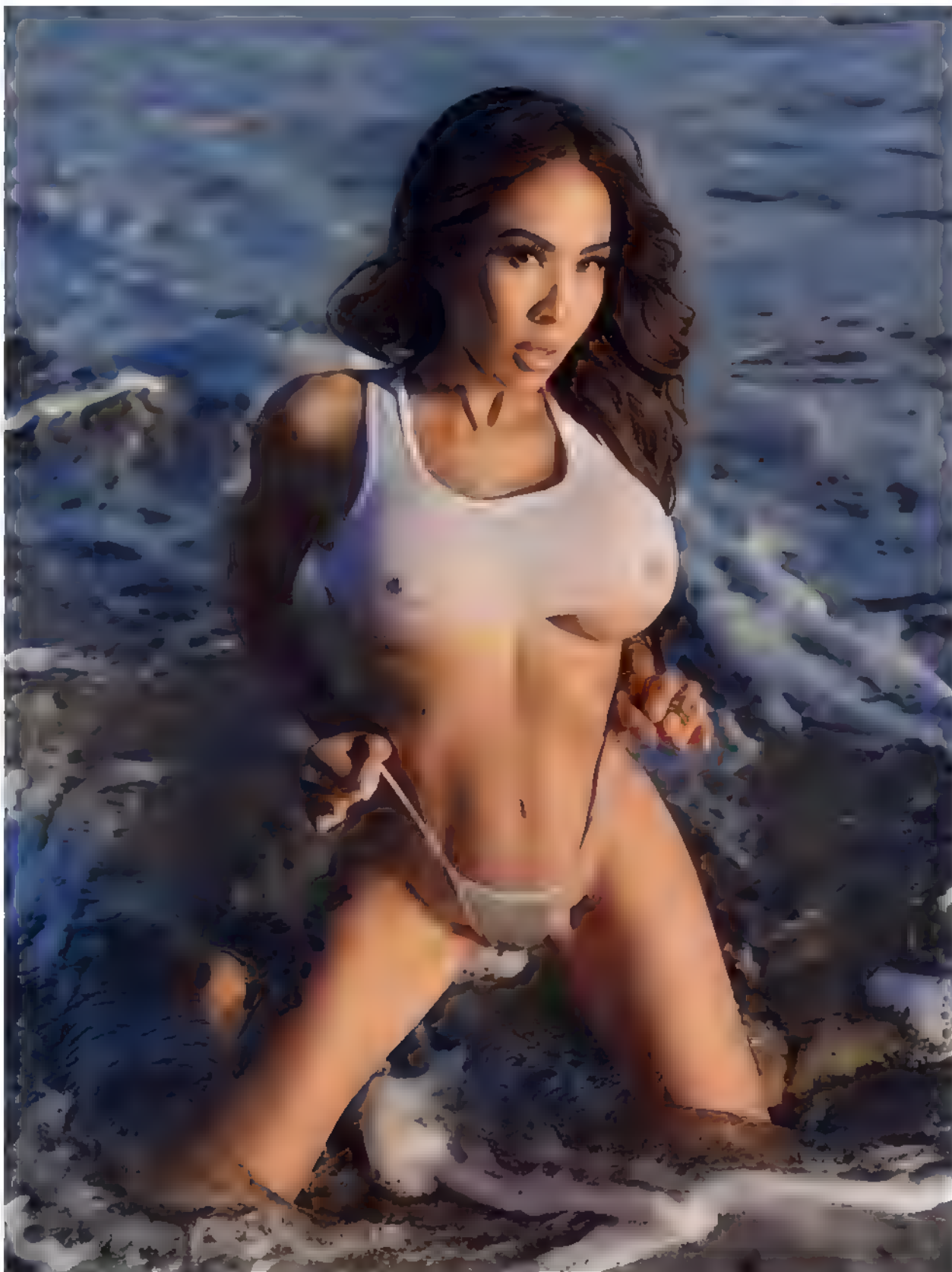
Who are some of the models or influencers that you admire and draw inspiration from in your career?

In my professional journey, I find inspiration in influential figures like Dwayne Johnson, Kim Kardashian, and Rihanna. What captivates me about them is not just their success in their respective fields but also their impact beyond. Dwayne Johnson's work ethic and motivational approach, Kim Kardashian's business acumen and influence on contemporary culture, and Rihanna's various achievements in music, fashion, and philanthropy all contribute to a diverse and impactful spectrum. Witnessing their ability to leverage their platforms for positive change fuels my aspiration to make a meaningful impact in my own career.

What's one thing about myself that fans might be surprised to learn? Fans might be surprised to discover my dual passions, a hopeless romantic who cherishes the beauty of love stories and a compassionate soul with a deep love for helping others. This unique combination adds layers of depth to my personality, reflecting a heartfelt appreciation for both the romantic and altruistic aspects of life. Behind the scenes, my love for helping others manifests in various ways, be it through volunteering, acts of kindness, or advocating for meaningful causes. This hidden aspect contributes to a multifaceted persona grounded in love, empathy, and positive impact.

3 things you can't go a day without. Three things I cannot go a day without are my family, my dog, and great food. Each day the comforting presence of my family creates a foundation of love and support. The companionship of my







dog adds a unique and unconditional connection. Additionally, the simple pleasure of enjoying amazing food not only nourishes my body but is a daily source of delight.

If you could choose one word to describe your journey as a model, what would it be and why? If I had to choose one word to describe my journey as a model, it would be evolution. This word encapsulates the continuous process of growth, adaptation, and transformation throughout my career. Each experience, challenge, and success contribute to the evolution of my perspective, and identity within this dynamic world.

What do you believe sets you apart from other models in the industry? I believe what sets me apart from other models in the industry is a unique blend of authenticity and versatility. Embracing my individuality allows me to bring a genuine quality to my work, while a willingness to explore and adapt showcases my versatility. This combination, I believe, sets me apart and contributes to a memorable presence.





Eaze's New Startup Accelerator Is Diversifying Cannabis

Leadership in the
cannabis industry

100% Cannabis
100% Cannabis
100% Cannabis
100% Cannabis
100% Cannabis
100% Cannabis

When Jennifer Lujan was hired as the director of social impact at Eaze, an online cannabis marketplace and delivery service, she immediately began brainstorming ways the company could make the industry a more equitable place. Throughout Lujan's six years working in cannabis, nearly three of which have been at Eaze, she's seen the industry take many shapes, from the grassroots days to the 2016 passage of California's Proposition 64, which legalized weed use for people over 21 and sparked an influx of cash and opportunities in the budding industry—notably via venture capital funding of businesses founded by white men.

Lujan saw firsthand how the war on drugs negatively impacted cannabis business owners and consumers of color, and she realized federal regulations made it difficult for underrepresented entrepreneurs—BIPOC (Black, indigenous and people of color), LGBTQ individuals and veterans—to get a foothold in the cannabis business. "We realized we should be doing more in this space," Lujan says. "We need to diversify the industry."

Leadership in the legal cannabis industry isn't wholly reflective of the community it serves. In 2019, just 37 percent of leadership positions in the industry were held by women, according to a Marijuana Business Daily's Women and Minorities in the Cannabis Industry report. According to a survey by Marijuana Business Daily, only 17 percent of cannabis executives were minorities in 2017. Regardless of industry, minority-owned companies are less likely to receive loans than nonminority-owned companies, according to a 2010 report from the U.S. Department of Commerce's Minority Business Development Agency. In an industry that requires exorbitant funding to finance licenses or secure retail space, access to capital is crucial.

As the largest legal cannabis marketplace in California, Eaze has access to a pool of dispensaries, distributors,

legal experts, marketers, engineers and, importantly, cash and investors. What if Eaze opened this network to entrepreneurs, Lujan wondered, and, specifically, to entrepreneurs from underrepresented communities?

Thus, the Momentum accelerator program was born. Launched last October, the initiative provides

10 diverse cannabis startups with a 10-week crash course in building a successful cannabis business. In November, after reviewing over 130 applications, Eaze announced the first cohort of 10 startups, each headed by a BIPOC founder with a mission to foster diversity and cultivate community within the cannabis industry.

Eaze facilitated video calls between the founders and various mentors early this year, and awarded \$50,000 grants to each company to support their businesses. The accelerator program culminated with a virtual pitch event, allowing each founder to introduce their business to investors, dispensaries and distributors.

Although progressive, the concept of a social equity program is hardly novel. States such as Pennsylvania, Michigan and Illinois have implemented cannabis equity programs, aimed at elevating the voices of marginalized

communities most frequently targeted by restrictive drug laws. Black people are far more likely to be arrested for marijuana possession than white people and, ironically, such possession charges can prevent those with a record from working in the cannabis industry. Some of these programs expunge the records of those convicted of marijuana offenses. Eaze, however, is one of the few companies using its own resources for social equity programming.

While avoiding the bureaucratic tangle of government equity programs, entrepreneurs in Eaze's accelerator program are able to take their \$50,000 grant and hit the ground running, says Nancy Do, founder of Endo Industries, one of the companies in the inaugural Momentum class. Do says she's been waiting for grant funding from San Francisco's social equity program for over two years, a delay many other entrepreneurs have experienced citywide. Eaze's grant was a quick, tangible resource that didn't take equity away from the startups themselves.

"It's the first step in getting to a place where we can actually compete with companies with a lot more resources," Do says. "We're already showing that we're taking a small amount of resources and multiplying them by 100 because we're really hungry."

Endo Industries began in 2009 as a medical operation, but now offers healthy starter plants and seeds to growers, and is working to build out a cannabis supply chain—all with a mind for social and racial equity. As a cannabis operator in California for over a decade, Do has been personally affected by federal prohibition. Endo Industries was raided in 2016 and she was arrested. "I had to fight four felonies for just trying to build an honest cannabis company," she says.



*"What is the
first step in
building a
successful
cannabis
business?"*

That Eaze wasn't ignorant to the histories of many entrepreneurs of color and specifically lifted up startups with marginalized founders was a selling point for Do. "It is kind of dark to unravel the history of cannabis and what has happened to communities of color and how we have been affected," she says. "However, I truly think we can have such a beautiful outcome from this, at this time in history."

Community Gardens's business plan centers on the history of cannabis culture too—albeit a lighter chapter. Another of Momentum's inaugural cohort, the Oakland-based company draws on prohibition-era practices in its delivery service. Through the

Momentum program, co-founder Raeven Duckett was able to develop the company's text-based ordering software, Mae, which allows customers to order weed deliveries via text—without downloading an app or creating an account—as a way of tapping into the unlicensed market consumer base. Named after a Black woman, Johnnie Mae Mezzrow, the wife of Mezz Mezzrow, a marijuana supplier in Harlem during the 1940s, the service aims to replicate the experience of texting a weed supplier.

"People are used to having a person they go to," Duckett says. "It's not necessarily a delivery company. It's like, 'Yo, I usually get my weed from Mae.'"

Duckett's Momentum investor mentor introduced her to a software developer who helped build Mae, evidence of the program's ability to provide resources for entrepreneurs who don't have access to a robust network. "As a minority founder and as a woman founder," Duckett says, "finding a software engineer we could work with—who would work with us at affordable rates—was something we just couldn't find anywhere else."

Despite the pitch event's move to a virtual platform, Momentum startups were able to connect with potential investors. But for one company, Los Angeles-based Ciencia Labs, the \$50,000 initial grant from Eaze may be enough to carry the business. Co-founded by cannabis scientist Carolina Vazquez Mitchell, Ciencia Labs didn't have a product on the market before applying to the accelerator program. Now available as a vape, tincture and beverage (and, soon, gummies), Ciencia Labs's Dreamt is a sleep aid whose scientific formula Vazquez Mitchell toiled over until she found the right combination of THC, CBD, melatonin, valerian root and sleep-inducing terpenes to keep users asleep all night. Eaze, as well as 100 other dispensaries across California, stock the product. Business is good, Vazquez Mitchell says. So



Raeven Duckett, co-founder of Community Gardens



An illustrated preview of Mae, Community Gardens's text-based ordering software, in action

good, in fact, that beyond Eaze's grant, the company may not need to relinquish any of its equity to outside investors—a major milestone for a Latina immigrant, she says.

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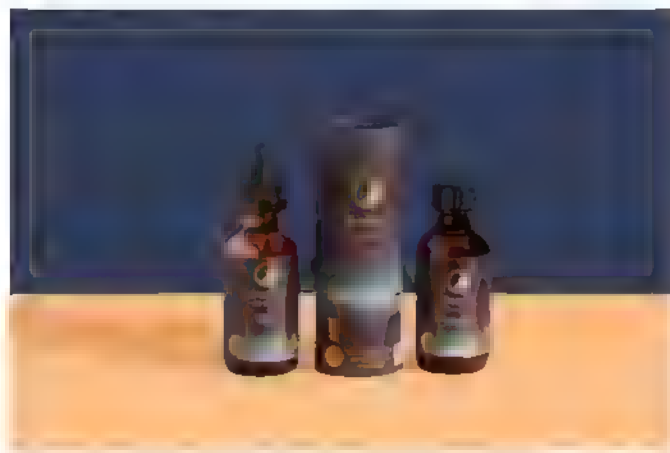
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Despite the positive strides, Momentum is only one accelerator promoting diversity among a plethora of new cannabis businesses that may not understand the industry's history or how communities were, and still are, affected by prohibition. But Eaze is leading by example. Other companies have reached out for



Carolina Vazquez Mitchell, co-founder of Ciencia Labs.



The Dreamt product offering, which Vazquez Mitchell crafted to aid with sleep.

tips on how to launch accelerator programs of their own or to lend support, Lujan says. Equity in cannabis is a movement, and larger players have a responsibility to invest in underrepresented communities, she argues. "The only way we're going to make progress as a whole," she says, "is if we're supporting one another."

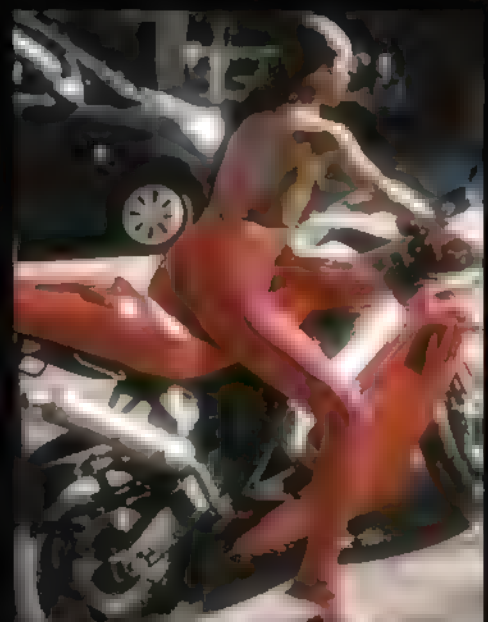


CULTURE SHOCK

A defiant and powerful public celebration of nudity, sexuality and the female body

PHOTOGRAPHY BY CARLOTA GUERRERO



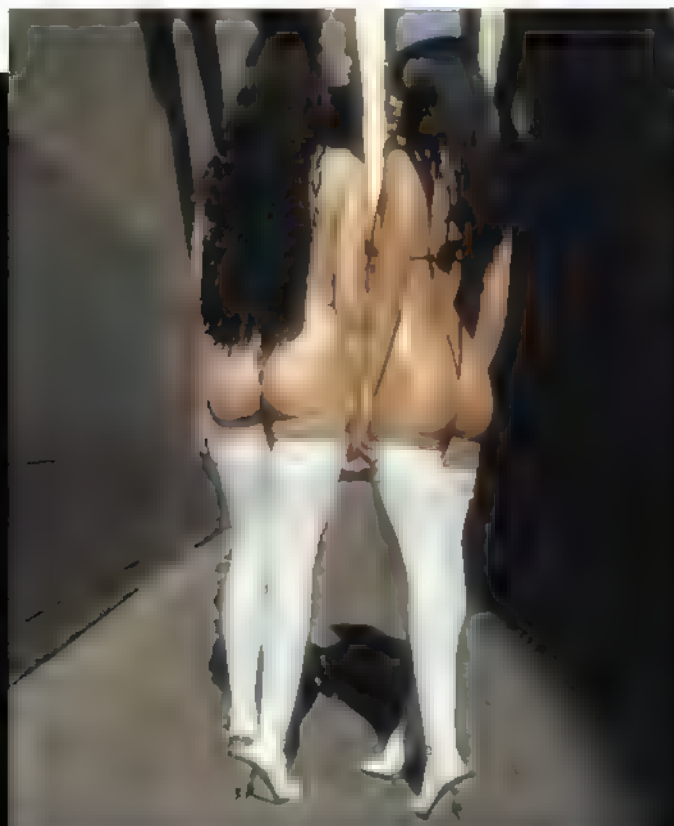




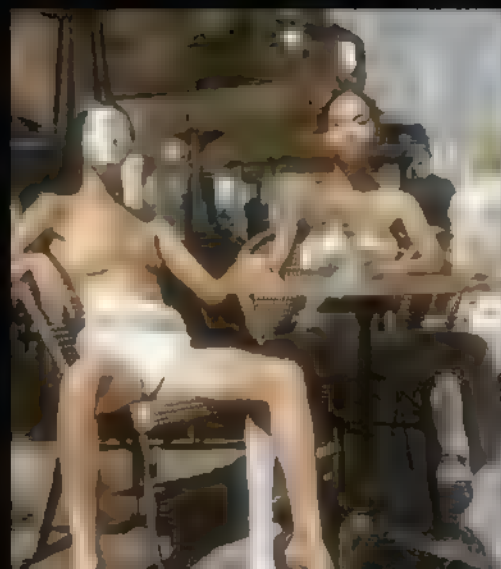
When PLAYBOY approached Carlota Guerrero about an original pictorial, the Spanish art director, who had gained international notoriety after shooting the indelible cover of Solange Knowles's 2016 album, *A Seat at the Table*, knew almost immediately what she wanted to accomplish: n"“I want to create an aesthetic inspired by the women who are empowered by their sexuality; I want to express that we are all goddesses and sexual beings at the same time.”

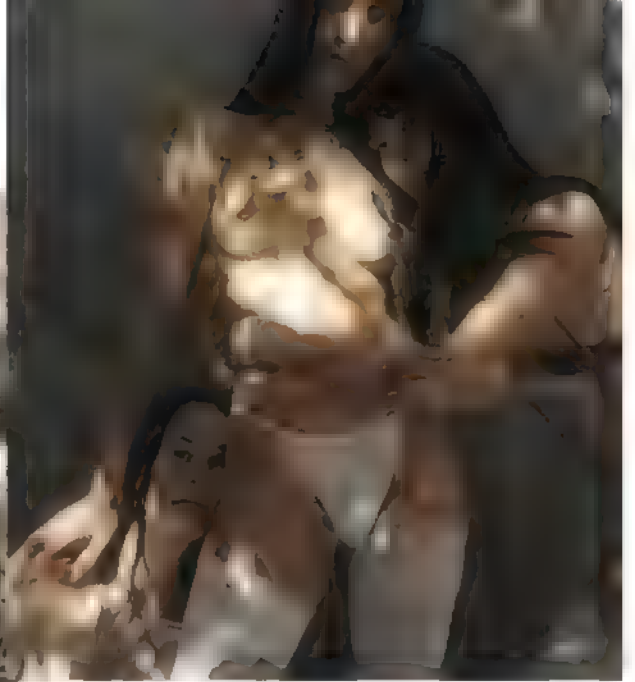
Featuring more than a dozen women in various states of undress marching through Barcelona (and challenging the law; the city banned toplessness in 2011), the following work shows how sexuality and sexual freedom—can be both performance art and public spectacle





*"I want to express that we
are all goddesses and sexual
beings at the same time."*





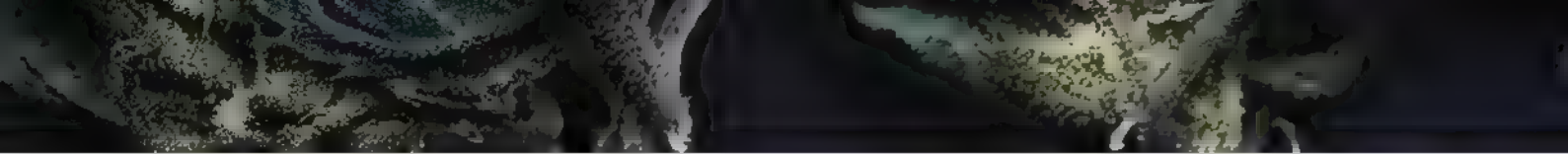
Featuring models Alex de la Croix, Dojores de la Rosal, Lovisa Lager, Virgin Maria, La Zow, extras Bernarda Antonia, Ana Nicole Montes de Oca, Colliander, Aminata Dao, ntissar El Meskine, Cristina Ramirez Garrido, Cláudia Grosche, Olivia Huerta, Ceina Bähr Martins, Nina Pham, Maya Ponzini, Elen Reynera, Elisa Sanfelu Ricart, Gabriela Richardson, Patricia Franquesa Ruiz, Dana Sava, Carolina Costa Trinchas.

Styling by Stephania Yepes, makeup by Gloria Rico, produced by O Creative Studio



A hand is shown holding a small, light-colored, fibrous piece of hemp over a white bowl. In the background, a glass filled with a brown liquid, likely hemp-based beverage, is visible. The scene is set against a white background with green foliage at the top and bottom edges.

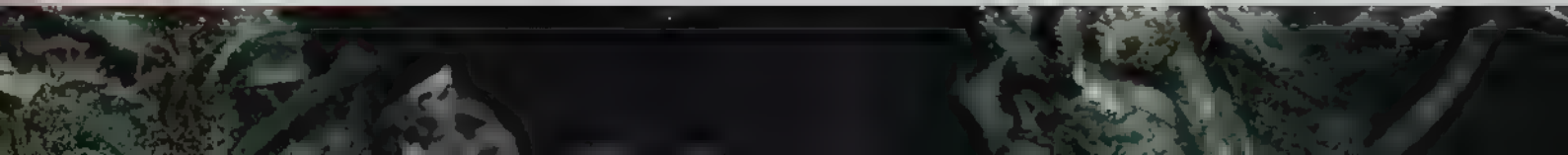
Willie Nelson's Vision for the Future of Hemp and Wellness



Expand your self-care routine
the Willie way: good sleep,
enough water and daily hemp

WRITTEN BY **CHLOE OLEWITZ**

PHOTOS BY **NORMAN POSSELT / FSTOP**, **JOHN FORSON ON UNSPLASH**



Country music legend Willie Nelson is known for having two things within reach at all times on his tour bus: something to smoke and a hot cup of coffee. So it came as no surprise when Nelson decided to launch his own weed-focused brand in 2016. Willie's Reserve became the embodiment of Nelson's beliefs about citizens' rights and responsibilities when it comes to weed in the United States, offering various THC-laden products, from prerolled joints to vape oils.

As Nelson expanded his interests from weed to hemp (a member of the cannabis family grown with less than 0.3 percent THC, the compound that gets you high), it was only natural that a new business venture followed. Through his newest company, Willie's Remedy, Nelson's passion for cannabis bears fruit in the form of an "everyday hemp" brand that uses the full range of nonintoxicating cannabinoids derived from hemp in a diverse array of products, most notably a first-of-its-kind whole-bean coffee infused with CBD that marries Nelson's love for cannabis and coffee.

Prepared according to the brewing instructions, a typical cup of Willie's Remedy coffee serves 15 mg of CBD, comfortably within the dosing range many canna-brands recommend for typical recreational use. The goal is to join the calming, anxiety-reducing properties of CBD with the natural energy boost of caffeine. The result is a more balanced, longer-lasting lift, as opposed to the crash-and-burn effect of caffeine that can bring on jitters and anxiety.

That balance is what keeps Elizabeth Hogan, vice president

of brands at Willie's Remedy's parent company, GCH Inc., drinking the coffee throughout the day. "You get all the uplifting energy and extroversion that people look for from coffee, but the edginess or anxiety that sometimes comes up with too much caffeine is totally taken down," she says.

Before Willie's Remedy officially launched at Nelson's annual Fourth of July Picnic in 2018, many of the performers that hung out backstage or visited Honeysuckle Rose, Nelson's famous tour bus, became informal taste testers. "A lot of guys come back to say, 'Wow, that's the pre-show drink I need!'" recalls Hogan. The idea of CBD-infused coffee as an alternative to the liquid courage of tequila shots, for example, points to the everyday hemp lifestyle the brand espouses.

When Nelson announced he'd stopped smoking in 2019, word spread that he had quit pot. It made a juicy headline, but the idea was ridiculous. Nelson told San Antonio's KSAT at the time: "I have abused my lungs quite a bit in the past, so breathing is a little more difficult these days and I have to be careful." Lung health is a serious concern for any singer, and certainly for an 87-year-old one who has talked openly about putting his body through the ringer. But quitting smoking doesn't have to mean quitting cannabis.



"Eating, drinking, adding it to your daily routine—it's another way to get the endocannabinoid system firing," Hogan says. Having nonsmoking options—whether a dose of CBD in your morning brew or munching on THC edibles—facilitates that range of choices. Nelson never quit pot, and smoking has never been the only way to consume weed or hemp. Today, in a world ravaged by a virus that attacks the lungs, alternative methods for cannabis consumption are more appealing than ever.

Nelson's goal is to introduce various avenues of consumption that will help people implement hemp as part of a daily wellness routine. Scientists increasingly accept the endocannabinoid system's role in regulating homeostasis in a number of major organs and biochemical processes, from the brain to the endocrine system to the immune response to energy levels. Why wouldn't you want to support the system that balances out the body? The brand imagines everyday hemp as another item on the list of things we already do to take care of ourselves, such as drinking water, sleeping well and getting exercise.

Although this isn't the only CBD coffee product on the market, it was the first fully infused whole-bean coffee (compared to preground coffee coated in oil). During the traditional coffee roasting process, each bean's natural oils travel to its surface. Then as the beans cool, they reabsorb those freshly released oils. Hemp oil is introduced directly into the roasting drum while the raw beans are being heated, so it can then be absorbed back into the roasted coffee beans along with all their natural oils.

**"Today, in a world
ravaged by a virus
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sumption are more
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A now-discontinued decaffeinated option never took off, but consumer demand inspired the team's turn to tea. They have launched six caffeinated and caffeine-free varieties brewed from leaves infused with full-spectrum hemp oil, in a similar process to the coffee bean infusion. Beyond brews, they also offer tinctures in four strengths and a topical CBD balm.

As the brand's official chief tasting officer, Nelson is deeply involved in the process of bringing every product to market. "But do you know who decides what makes it to Willie Nelson?" Hogan asks. The answer is Annie Nelson, Willie's wife. It was Annie who brought the idea of hemp-infused coffee to the table in the first place, and she still curates the hemp applications the team tries, tastes and experiments with.

Yes, Annie is married to Willie, and yes, cannabis is a part of her daily life. But while Willie takes a no-holds-barred approach to weed, Annie actually isn't a big fan of getting high. It's not that she has anything against smoking weed, she just prefers to commune with cannabis in other ways. Before Willie's eponymous brands existed, Annie had spent years experimenting at home, cooking up all kinds of cannabis concoctions from both weed and hemp.

In addition to being highly involved in product development, the Nelsons also take an active role in destigmatizing the use of the plant. Willie has been vocal about his support of cannabis from the start and has paid the price at times—he has been arrested for possession and pulled over various times for searches of his tour bus. After decades spent touting the benefits of weed and championing legalization, breaking into the business with his own brands was personally meaningful for Nelson. His advocacy is part and parcel of his legacy, and his justice-minded priorities are baked into both the Reserve and Remedy brands.

Nelson and his team refuse to lose sight of the sheer number of people who are imprisoned for selling a commodity that cannabis companies now trade in legally. That fact drives their push for legalization, which could reverse decades of unjust incarceration while also opening the door to funded research into cannabis as medicine. Meanwhile, because cannabis and coffee are both plants grown in the ground, they are both impacted by the global realities that farmers face, from issues of racial justice to the threat of climate chaos.

That's how sourcing became one of the ways the company turns ethics into action. Their beans come from coffee farm cooperatives in Colombia and Nicaragua that are dedicated to serving their local communities, creating opportunities for farmers and supporting women entrepreneurs. On the CBD side, they use carbon-dioxide-extracted full-spectrum hemp oil sourced from independent Colorado farms that employ organic farming methods.

It's a mouthful, but hyper-precise labeling also feeds into the brand's mission. They believe in building a safe environment for consumers, and in the wild west of CBD, that starts with education. They want transparent and honest labeling to become standard practice so consumers can know how much of each active ingredient they're getting and see exactly how each product was made. It comes at a cost, but they see empowering consumers as a necessary step toward reframing hemp as an element of wellness instead of as a ploy for corporate wealth.

of each new day.

with Willie and talk with him about cannabis and all of its
this plant.









WE KNOW WHY HORROR FILMS MAKE YOU HORNY

Feeling scared and sexually aroused aren't mutually exclusive—they actually go hand-in-hand during Halloween time

BY TORI LYNN ADAMS

ILLUSTRATION BY OLLY JEAVONS

Spidey captured his attention away from the window, toward the nearest receptacle. I could feel it swiftly trapped the spider underneath it. Things then suddenly control and yet I still felt terrified of the unknown: what was the spider doing in there? Plotting his escape? All day I felt a nervous itch to lift the canister and face my fear, I avoided it for hours until I finally lifted it and smooshed the eight-legged beast.

I was satisfied or I was to find it dead, and I was proud of my specimen, then was something thrilling about the whole escapade, especially considering how mundane life has been during the pandemic. There is a unique pleasure we derive from the sensation of being afraid, it's part of the reason horror films are so popular and emotionally effective.

Because all this went up my mind, I began taking notes on horror films and watching one of college. My homework usually consisted of some insightful reading and a handful of horror films. I quickly found that as spine-chilling as the films were, they were also quite cathartic. The anticipation I experienced while watching the films was almost more tolerable than anything that would actually happen on screen. I also found that some of the most terrifying scenes were actually the most pleasurable to watch. When MacKenzie is stabbed to death in the 1981 classic *Psycho*, the camera eroticized the skin of her bare skin as she roared agonically and collapsed to the ground. We are called upon to be frightened and aroused, stimulated at the same time.

According to film scholar Linda Williams, there are three types of film considered "body genres," along with melodrama and pornography. Each genre demands a physical response, whether it's screaming, crying, or gasping. Even in the case of some horror films, all three. Consequently, films that straddle all three genres are some of the most emotionally and physically impactful movies we will ever watch. But as powerful as these films are, they have their limitations.

Take the pornography, for instance. Censorship in Hollywood theaters and largely unregulated in their early days, any and all films that were going to be shown in popular theater chains had to abide by a strict set of rules regulating how sex was depicted on screen. For horror films to reach a wide audience and still exploit sexuality, directors and screenwriters often bent the rules by substituting the depiction of sex for painting sexuality in a negative light to please industry leaders and avoid censorship. During the days of the Hays Production Code (from 1930 to 1968), representations of sexuality were censored but a lot of violence wasn't, says Morgan Woolsey, a former professor and a current lecturer at the University of California, Los Angeles. "The response [the directors came up with] was to combine sexuality with depicting in a dirty, sex example, you could have a massive seduction sequence to drink the blood

As a result, horror films often encourage viewers to both fear and crave the action on screen.

When you feel horny and horrified at the same time, it's natural for the body to go into overdrive to process the competing emotions. Our emotions are primal, so although our bodies subconsciously know how to react to any given scenario, our brains may take some time to catch up. Horror films blur the line between fear and desire and cause us to respond in a more extreme manner.

To further complicate things, film directors often manipulate the gaze of their camera so the audience can relate to both the victims and the killers at different points in the film. The experience ranges from masochistic to sadistic depending on the gaze of the camera and the relationship viewers have to the people on screen. "The horror film allows audiences to be on both sides of this power and to move flexibly from one position to the other," Woolsey says. "There's something very BDSM-esque about that."

"There's an endless variety of eroticism in horror, just like there's an endless variety in what people find erotic."

Perhaps one of the more obvious ways power is employed on screen is in vampire films. From *Dracula* to *Edward Cullen*, vampires have often been portrayed as powerful entities whose sensual nature attracts women to their demise. The same is true for the vampires in the 1983 flick *The Hunger*, starring David Bowie, Susan Sarandon and Catherine Deneuve. It is seemingly impossible for mortal characters to resist the charms of the vampires they meet, but giving in to their desires always leads to a power struggle where violence, sometimes shown quite subtly, is inevitable.

Almost all horror films tap into our twisted sense of desire even if it isn't in the most obvious way. "Some of the classic slashers, like *Halloween*, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and *Friday the 13th*, may appear to be devoid of sexuality, but this is just because actual sex is completely sublimated through violence," Woolsey points out.

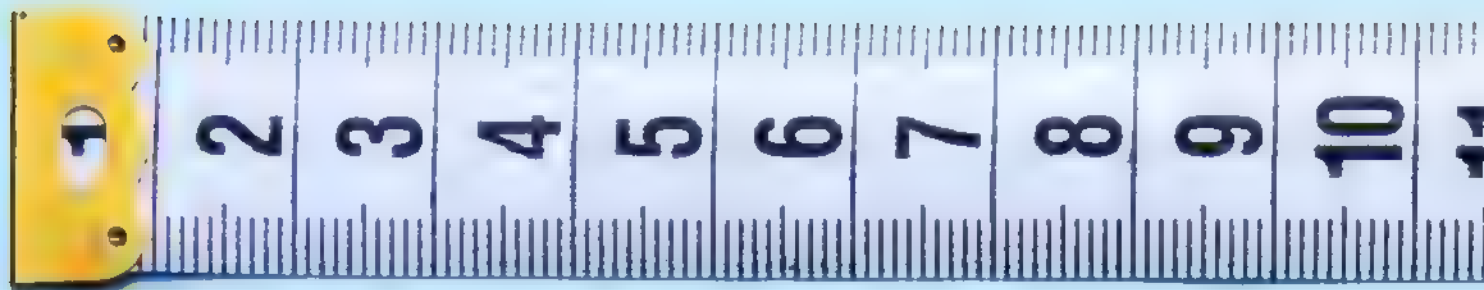
Take *Jaws* for example. Steven Spielberg's summer blockbuster had people flocking from the beaches to the theaters, time and again. People were scared to go swimming during the summer of 1975, but they made repeat visits to theaters. The experience was simply too enthralling to resist. When John Williams's three-note theme begins and the shark approaches the boat, you can't help but brace yourself for the inevitable attack. Each time the shark swims away and lets them off the hook, you relax—but only briefly. You get tenser and tenser until finally the shark attacks and your expectations are met. Sound familiar? It's probably not too unlike your sexual climaxes.

You would be hard-pressed to find a horror film that doesn't tap into this uncanny relationship between our fears and fantasies.

There's an endless variety of eroticism in horror, just like there's an endless variety in what people find erotic, Woolsey argues. By tapping into that curious dichotomy, horror films demand our attention and force us to respond physically and emotionally.

In the real world, we are forced to abide by laws and social customs, but when we are plugged into a good horror film we can explore any and all taboos in a socially acceptable and safe 90-minute window, and come out the other side horrified, relieved and, if we're lucky, sexually satisfied.





The Myth of Magnum Condoms

Size matters, but not in the way you think

You know what they say about guys who have big feet, right? They wear condoms that fit their cocks. No, people aren't saying that.

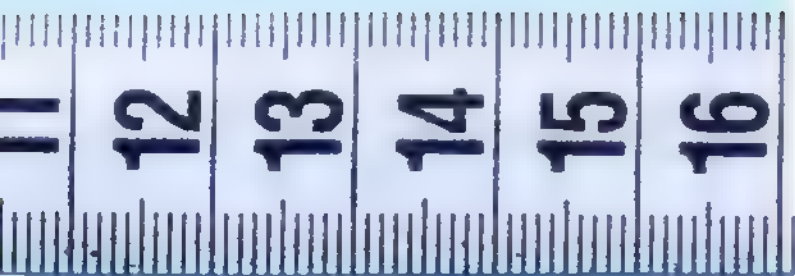
"If the shoe fits, wear it!" You're probably more familiar with that one. Can you imagine if you bought shoes two sizes too big in order to impress someone? That would be silly, not to mention a tripping hazard. So why buy condoms that don't fit your penis? I have a pretty good idea where the "bigger penis equals better sex" fallacy came from: porn—but I won't hold them solely responsible. The idea also stems directly from a lack of proper sex education. Penis diversity is never talked about—let alone different sizes of condoms.

But before we get into that, let's talk about penis size. A meta-analysis published in the *British Journal of Urology*

International found that, globally, the average erect penis length is a little more than five inches—a bit shorter than the iPhone 6s. There are outliers, of course, but if we surveyed 100 penis owners, only about 15 would have penises longer than six inches and only five would have penises shorter than four inches. The average penis girth found in the study was 4.6 inches. With the magic of pi, we know that means an average of about 1.5 inches in diameter.

Knowing your particular dimensions is key when selecting a condom. So how does one find the right fit?

Don't worry about asking to borrow your friend's phone that hasn't been upgraded since 2015 so you can measure your penis. The ideal measuring device is probably already in your house: a roll of toilet paper. This may have been a difficult task



If your condom looks like a sandwich bag on your penis, that isn't a good fit.

earlier this year (#Covid), but I'm confident you have one to spare. Make your penis hard and insert it into the cardboard tube. If it fits comfortably, you will likely do well with most standard-sized condoms. If it is a little roomy, you may want to explore slimmer-fitting brands. If it's tight or you can't fit your erect penis into the tube, you should consider Magnums and other brands of larger condoms.

Why does this matter?

When used properly, condoms are a great way to prevent pregnancy and STI transmission, so we want condoms to work the way they are supposed to. A properly sized condom fits the penis well, doesn't cause the user discomfort and doesn't break. If your condom looks like a sandwich bag on your penis, that isn't a good fit. Due to user error, many condoms'

effectiveness rates are lower during real-life sex than when tested for breakage, and having poor-fitting condoms definitely contributes to those lowered rates.

Knowing the condom size that's right for you is great, but you also have to consider the variations of your penis. This is your permission slip to really inspect the specifics of your penis. Is the head particularly large? Is the shaft slim all the way up and down? Does it have a wider base? These factors can all impact how a condom is going to both fit and feel. Don't think, "I tried them once and they didn't work for me," or the classic, "I'm too big for a condom." If you watched my recent Playboy Advisor Live, you saw me put a condom over my entire forearm. If you're larger than that, we should chat.

Based on the numbers in the British Journal of Urology International study, it stands to reason that penis owners may need to explore more size options.

Let's review how to put a condom on a penis properly. First, make sure the condom isn't expired and the packaging hasn't been compromised. Open it with your hands—not your teeth!—and check the tip orientation of the rolled-up condom. It should be applied to an erect penis like a little hat, so you can roll it down with ease.

An additional option: Stretch out the condom ring before you put it on. Maybe a certain size almost fits you, but the bottom digs into your base. Give the ring a few stretches before you roll it on, which may help alleviate the pinching tightness at the base.

You can also add a drop of lube in the tip for added sensation. It really makes a difference! Now pinch the tip of the condom and roll it down the penis shaft until you reach the base. (Bonus points if you can do it with your mouth.) Now you can have fun!

It's absolutely okay to change up the brand and style of condoms you use. There are literally hundreds on the market. Whether you need a snugger fit, a wider one because you're particularly girthy or a larger reservoir tip for your head, I'm confident your Goldilocks perfect-fitting condom is out there. Leave your ego in aisle six and pick up the right fit for you. It's also okay if you are just now learning about condoms. Thank you for taking the time to invest in safer sex, and high-five to you for using a condom!





SOCIAL
BUTTERFLY

Susan Hoff

Instagram @oathandgrind

Photography by **Sarah Lyons Gabman** | EpicDestinationShoot.com
[@EpicDestinationShoot](https://www.instagram.com/EpicDestinationShoot)
Hair & Makeup **Lisa Opie** | [@Lisa_Opie](https://www.instagram.com/Lisa_Opie)
Wardrobe Styling **Joey Rolon** | [@JoeyRolon](https://www.instagram.com/JoeyRolon)







How do you like to begin your day? Early, in a ponytail, wearing a kiss of spicy lip gloss enjoying a bit of morning Cantucci and coffee, followed by a hearty gym workout.

How did you get started in the modeling industry? What inspired you to become a model? I'm an International WBFF Fitness Pro competitor. I met several professional photographers while traveling for shows who encouraged my modeling work. Nowadays I don't compete annually, but travel often for photoshoots to amazing destinations.

Best place you have ever been to in the world? Tetiaroa, a private atoll in French

Polynesia. Accessible only via airplane, it's luxurious, romantic, remote, and always stocks incredible champagne.

What are some of your biggest dreams you hope to achieve? Gracing the cover of Playboy is right up there. It's an absolute honor! I'd also love to model in an international fashion show for Versace or Dior someday. Gigi Hadid is my 'spirit animal' as a little powerhouse with long legs. Honestly, at this age, many would say I've lived a charmed life. I'm a college graduate, earned my Master's degree (I studied at UniSA for one session), am a retired CCO (Chief Communications Officer) for a Fortune 500 NYSE company, am the Proprietress of an iconic

winery in Napa Valley, California USA, and have a loving family who support all my entrepreneurial endeavors.

What does freedom of self-expression mean to you? The right to be yourself in any environment. I enjoyed working in an electronics industry that was mostly male-dominated. I knew who I was, and what I was capable of bringing to the board room. When I went to work I dressed to impress - not to blend into the corporate style that had women simply fitting in. That's nonsense! I wore my tresses long, slightly tousled, a pencil skirt, a fetching jacket or a stylish dress, and always in stilettos or high-heeled boots. I'm 5'2" with long legs and heels











were a must. I'm still so comfortable in them, I could probably wear them on a basketball court if I needed to. Dressing for an occasion is always a pleasure.

How do you prepare physically and mentally for a photo shoot that will be seen by so many people?

I'm in the gym lifting six days a week. I need to be photoshoot-ready quickly so I don't miss wonderful opportunities like this one. I've had the same strength coach for over 16 years. We train certain muscle groups to garner the look I'll need. I'm also a big macro (nutrient) counter, so a basic diet down, decreasing macros is a must, just as a slow uptick in macros after a shoot back to normal is par for the course. (It just isn't as intense as it is for the professional fitness stage that wants to count my abs and see muscular development.) I also research the magazines, poses, and wardrobes I'd like to wear for the shoot and work with the photographer in advance to align expectations. I enjoy photo shoots. I like the prep, the day off, and the reward of seeing the images published. It's easy to get into the mood when you enjoy what you are doing.

What are your favorite aspects of modeling, and what challenges have you encountered along the way? I enjoy the preparation on maybe as much as I enjoy being in front of the lens. The research, learning about the site, the wardrobe, the makeup, the hair styling, the photographer's panache, the lighting effects, the magazine's content, the travel, and even the workouts to achieve just the right look. Being in front of the lens is a treat and I don't take the opportunity lightly. I'm an older model with a bit more seasoning, so not much intimidates me. If it doesn't feel right, I just don't accept the shoot. The craziest challenges have usually been working with the site locations. I almost rolled off a cliff near Lake Tahoe getting a bikini shot and another time in London had an onlooker ask my photographer for directions while I was changing behind the reflector he was holding. Believe me, every shoot has a story.

Who are some of the models or influencers that you admire and draw inspiration from in your career? Pamela Anderson, Angelina Jolie, and Naomi Campbell are all stunning women who have achieved so much and are



as smart as they are beautiful. Throughout the years they all have had incredible staying power. Their personas are sexy, real, and relevant. Who doesn't want to learn about the work they do, and the causes they represent and follow their social channels for a glimpse at their life?

What's one thing about yourself that your fans might be surprised to learn? I'm a new grandmother! My granddaughter calls me GrG.

3 things that you can't go a day without. My morning rituals, my iPhone (I like to be connected), and an opportunity for a quiet moment to appreciate where I am and who I'm with.

If you could choose one word to describe your journey as a model so far, what would it be, and why? Empowering. I dedicated my 20s and 30s to building a high-profile career and a family. It wasn't until my 40s that I could invest real effort into my fitness and modeling careers.

What do you believe sets you apart from other models in the industry? My life experiences. Being a desired model is more than looks. My business career, my travels, my competitions, my personal life and all the lessons - wins and losses - that come with the years reflect in my persona. There's something special that happens in front of the lens with experience. Prowess comes with time.

Can you share any exciting upcoming projects or collaborations you're involved in? I have another national magazine photoshoot on the books. I collaborate with several health and longevity products on my fitness channel @OathandGrind. Our Napa Valley winery is growing nationally while our European organic wine brand is jump-starting its growth in the USA next spring. Between modeling, gym time, wine work, fashion shows, international travel, and family events, my schedule keeps me on my toes.

Thanks so much for your time. Where can our readers follow you on social to stay updated on what you're up to? IG: @OathandGrind or @FantascaGirl FB: Susan Hoff or Oath and Grind with Susan Hoff X @susanhoff or @oathandgrind Websites Linktree/SusanHoff or Fantasca.com or oathandGrind.com.





What Should Porn for Women Look Like?

THE UNIVERSITY OF
PITTSBURGH
LIBRARY

I grew up on the porn of the early 2000s. Late at night, my eight-inch TV (with built-in VCR!) picked up bleach-blonde hair, surgically enhanced boobs and landing strips so thin they could be mistaken for John Waters's mustache. I squinted to make out vaginas getting plundered by salami-sized dicks in "straight" porn and jammed by fingers decorated with uncomfortable-looking press-on nails in "lesbian" porn. If a clit was ever touched—which was rarely—it was with the same energy as a flamenco guitarist after a three-day coke binge or someone trying to erase a wrong answer on a Scantron with 30 seconds left on an important exam.

As I learned more about my body—particularly my clit—and started replicating things I learned in porn, I realized none of the stuff I was seeing could result in an actual orgasm for a person with my anatomy. At first, I thought I was broken—that there was something wrong with my body—but then I started talking to women and hearing similar frustrations: The methods to please us that our partners learned from porn simply didn't work. Many of us shared the pain of a partner believing they can stick it in an ass in one fluid motion with spit as lube, the confusion of not being able to orgasm from penetration alone, the exhaustion of girl-on-top becoming a Barry's Bootcamp-style squat workout with no climax and the guilt of thinking our bodies are at fault.

It would be fine if we could all recognize that we've been lied to and have a cultural understanding that porn isn't real, that it's a fantasy not to be tried at home. But we don't.

Instead, we have a world in which people believe mainstream porn is a real, usable instruction manual for how to please someone with a vulva and assume the orgasms depicted on screen are real.

As an adult, I couldn't look at porn the same way again, and I stopped watching it altogether. Every time I'd try to get off, the knowledge that the women were faking it made me feel bad. And don't get me started on the misinformation. When I became a sex writer and educator, all the myths I had been taught as fact via scrambled TV were things I was now correcting via DMs and weekly Q&A sessions on my Instagram.

The chasm between what real sex looks like and what sex looks like in porn continues to widen. I tell people that sex in porn is to real sex as the WWE is to wrestling in the Olympics. The mechanics are there, but one is purely entertainment and blown way out of proportion. For me, the choice is whether to exclude yourself from watching porn entirely or watch something that leaves a knot in your stomach.

Luckily, it seems the sex industry is waking up to the way people get turned on. Sex-positive bloggers and publications such as *Salty* exist on Instagram (when they're not combating shadow bans). Sex toy companies like Unbound, Satisfyer, Womanizer and Fun Factory have followings akin to influencers. Activists, writers and sex-positive brands are calling bullshit on tropes that have been perpetuated since Debbie did Dallas. Porn from PinkLabel tv, the CrashPad Series and Erika Lust is seeking to offset the misinformation and lack of pleasure in porn, and the cultural ramifications of both.

When I was invited to observe a shoot for Bellesa Films, I immediately said yes. Scrolling through Bellesa's Instagram posts and looking at their collaborations with Laurie Mintz, author of *Becoming Cliterate* and wearer of a clitoris necklace, I could see Bellesa putting in the work. The production company prides itself on having women call the shots every step of the way (Bellesa was founded by a woman and features scenes both written and directed by women), and I was interested to see firsthand what porn looks like when it's created by people with my parts.

I knew things would be different the moment I arrived on set at 8:30 on a Tuesday morning in the San Fernando Valley and my five-foot-six, brunette, Macy's catalogue, not-Victoria's-Secret-lookin' ass was mistaken as "talent" by the makeup artist (which my 15-year-old self would consider one of the biggest thrills in my life to date).

The male performer, Damon Dice, was stuck in rush hour traffic, so while we waited, I chatted with Bellesa founder and CEO Michelle Shnaidman, director Jacky St. James, PA Shawn Alfi and the crew, as the female performer, Cassidy Klein, stretched and used a foam roller on the floor. We spoke about Cassidy's plans for her birthday—hiking and camping by herself—which turned into a group conversation about mortality and growing older. The vibe was so comfortable that only when I accidentally spilled coffee on the floor and it was immediately cleaned up with a baby wipe was I reminded exactly where I was.

When Damon arrived, production immediately got down to business. Bellesa takes creating a story so seriously that about half the filming time was spent nailing the exposition. Each Bellesa movie has an actual backstory before the sex happens. This wasn't the pizza delivery guy of yesteryear or even the stepbrother fucking his stepsister and stepmom of today. In this scene, Cassidy was going to her sister's ex-fiance's

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For the first time, we're making women participants in sex instead of bystanders, and Bellesa nails this beautifully.

house to pick up the rest of her sister's stuff and return her engagement ring. This premise—like most Bellesa Films features—began as a fantasy suggestion from one of Bellesa's community members.

Just like a commercial movie set, Jacky stopped Damon and Cassidy often to talk about inflection, tone and character development. The connection they were creating on film carried over between takes as they playfully touched and hugged each other. (I later learned that Bellesa makes sure real-life chemistry exists by asking the female performer what type of sex she wants to have and with which male performer she wants to have it before the script is written.)

Next, Cassidy showed Jacky the clothes she brought as wardrobe options. I was expecting discussions about lingerie, but they went with an army green spaghetti-strap tank top, jeans, brown strappy sandals and a flesh-colored bra. A flesh-colored bra! You know, what normal people wear when they're not expecting to have sex. The scene hadn't even started, and I was already sold.

After the exposition had been filmed to her liking and a few clothed promo shots were photographed, Jacky prepared the set for the next part by announcing, "Hey, anybody wanna fuck?" We laughed.

After the performers showed each other their latest STI test results, Jacky asked them to semi-privately talk to each other about dos and don'ts. I caught Cassidy mentioning to Damon that she really enjoys having her neck licked and kissed. Everything else was between the two of them, out of earshot. When the scene started and the camera was rolling, one of the first things Damon did was lick the entire length of her neck in one stroke. The look on Cassidy's face made my heart flutter.

I realize the fantasy is having a partner who gives a shit about getting you off. Vulva-havers are looking for sex that looks the way it looks when there's a great partner involved who doesn't see our bodies as merely something to masturbate with. To see Cassidy not being treated as a conquest, I immediately thought of all the women now learning about their bodies and thinking, My pleasure counts

too. I should have a say in how good this feels for me too. For the first time, we're seeing women as participants in sex instead of bystanders, and Bellesa nails this beautifully.

There's laughter as they fumble to take their clothes off and a continuation of the storyline throughout the sex, with Damon ad-libbing, "I'm so glad you stayed," after making out some more. He asks for consent before fingering her and again before going down on her, and he even eats pussy the right way, where the mechanics of it are so small they aren't visible. Pussy-eating in most porn looks like a 13-year-old's first kiss on a dance floor. When Damon spits on her, he does so stealthily instead of passionately hocking a loogie onto her cooch like it had just disrespected his father (one of my biggest porn pet peeves). He doesn't eat her out to orgasm, but at least it looks similar to what would eventually cause an orgasm. They even mutually masturbate a few times and I see Cassidy smiling as she self-stimulates.

When she rides him, she tilts her pelvis forward a little more than is typical in porn, and I can believe her clitoris was grinding on his pelvis. Her legs shake in a way that doesn't seem manufactured. Her moans crescendo, and she orgasms—but not the screaming, eye-rolling, tongue-out kind of porn "orgasm" that's about as subtle as a punch in the face.

"Did you really come?" Jacky asks Cassidy. "I don't believe you."

"I swear, I really did!" Cassidy says. And I believe her.

They take a quick break between sex positions. As the crew changes camera positions, Cassidy and Damon compare and explain their tattoos like old friends. "Don't feel the need to orgasm unless it's actually real," Jacky reminds Cassidy before cueing the camera again. "It's not supposed to be perfect; it's supposed to be real." I wondered how many times that phrase was uttered on the set of the porn I watched at 2 A.M. when I was 15 years old.

And, just as she says, it isn't perfect. There are some things Jacky says she has to get the talent to unlearn. I notice Damon grab Cassidy's wrist to place her hand on his dick and then push her head while she gives him oral—which lasts longer than the time spent on Cassidy—but I notice him catch himself and stop. When Damon lets "I want you to taste your pussy on my dick" slip while Cassidy is blowing him post-vaginal sex, Jacky is quick to sternly tell him she's going to cut that part out.

"You're gonna get notes; I'm gonna be hard on you," she tells him half-teasingly before leaning over to me to say, "It's kind of liberating because they have to unlearn everything."

I'm ready to unlearn everything from porn too.



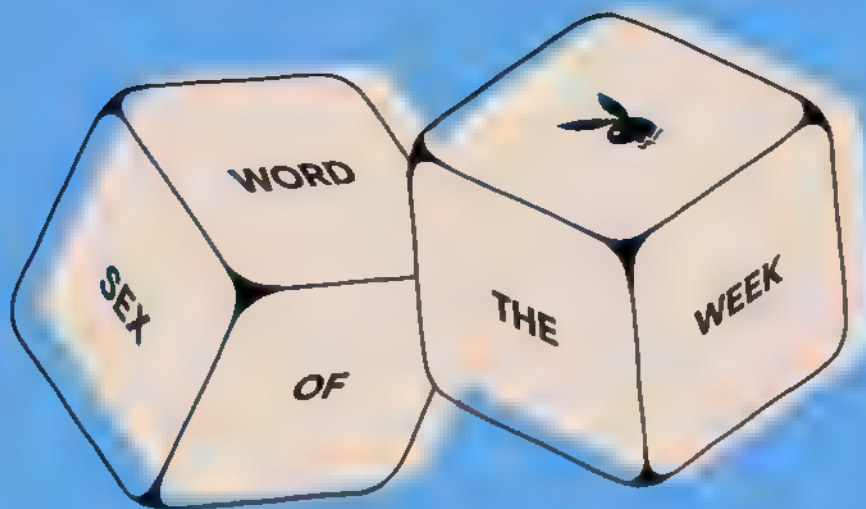


I'm excited for people to become more personal with their porn. After all, you used to only hope to get a glimpse of a titty after asking to head to the back room of a Blockbuster. Now, your seatmate on Spirit Airlines is playing it on their phone, listening to moans through a pair of AirPods. To get to know a brand and develop a connection to their porn, as well as a concern that it's socially responsible? That's what should happen as porn studios become household brands. Beyond those Girls Gone Wild DVDs you ordered at 3 A.M. or the monthly subscription you had to Bang Bus in college, would you have been able to name any production companies five or 10 years ago? I couldn't.

But times are a-changin'.

Bellesa Films recently asked its community about using sex toys during partnered sex—something I've desperately wanted to be normalized in porn, and they're making it happen. Bellesa Films is building a brand by incorporating multiple facets of women's sexuality, which has been treated as a second thought for so long. We know a person with a penis comes in porn because there's physical evidence. Navigating the world and not knowing if your orgasm is guaranteed by nature makes you view porn a different way. Sex sells, and vulva-havers are buying too.

"Don't feel the need to orgasm unless it's actually real. It's not supposed to be perfect; it's supposed to be real."



X-Cross

WRITTEN BY
ANITA LITTLE

ILLUSTRATIONS BY
KATIE BAILIE

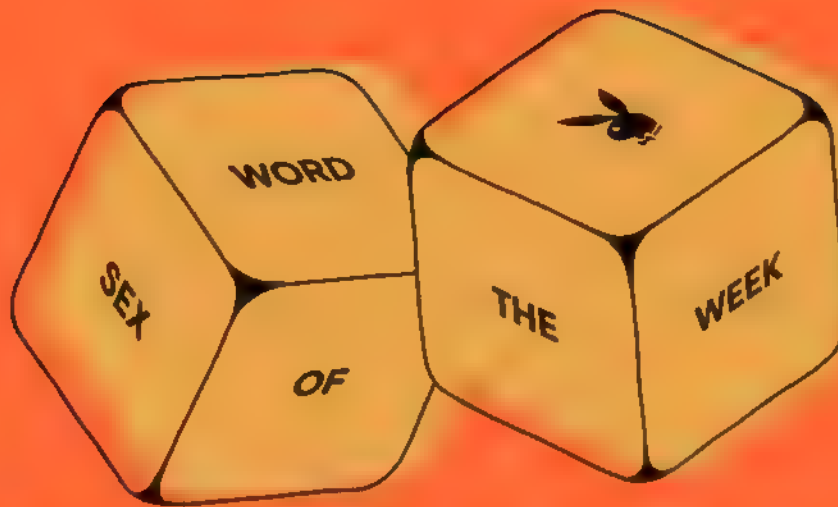
If your libidinous mind can imagine it, there's probably already a term for it

X-cross (n) a piece of equipment popular in BDSM dungeons that is used to restrain a submissive's ankles and wrists in an upright spread-eagle position

The domme tightened her sub's limbs to the X-cross, leaving him bound, helpless and incredibly turned on.

Though the X-cross, also known as a Saint Andrew's cross or saltire, is quite common in BDSM dungeons around the world, the equipment gained mainstream notoriety in the 2011 erotic novel *Fifty Shades of Grey*, when it's used to secure the hapless Anastasia Steele. This piece of BDSM furniture is usually metal or wood and comes in the shape of a vertical diagonal cross. The subject's wrists and ankles are splayed and tied to the four posts, allowing the subject to be teased with whips, flogs, crops or the domme's bare hands. For those craving a more intense experience, some X-crosses can even be made to spin on an axis. (Who wants to play Wheel of Fortune?)

The image of someone trapped on a diagonal cross has Christian origins, as it's believed that's how Saint Andrew, the patron saint of Scotland, was martyred. When he refused to stop spreading the teachings of Jesus Christ, he was sentenced to death by crucifixion. Believing he wasn't holy enough to die in the same manner as Jesus, he asked for his cross to be turned sideways. Centuries later you have a brutal torture device that has been repurposed for both pain and pleasure.



Spectrophilia

WRITTEN BY
ANITA LITTLE

ILLUSTRATIONS BY
KATIE BAILIE

If your libidinous
mind can imagine
it, there's probably
already a term for it

spectrophilia (n) an intense
sexual attraction to ghosts

Although none of her friends believed
her and dismissed her as a hopeless
spectrophile, Mandy knew the sexual
encounter she had was real—and with a
spirit from another realm.

Remember the poster scene ~~between~~ Patrick
Swayze and Demi Moore in *Ghost*? Oh, I bet you
do. It's one of the most sensual and erotic movie
moments ever, and had the romantic duo ~~even~~
even among the living. If you felt yourself get a

bit tingly while watching, you're not alone in the
slightest.

Spectrophilia describes a sexual attraction to
or paranormal sexual encounter with ghosts and
spirits. That's right, ghost sex. This fetish may seem
a little out of this world, but there are plenty of
~~loud and proud spectrophiles out there who claim~~
to have fallen in love with ghosts or gotten down
and dirty with those on the other side of the veil.
The most notable example was when pop star Kesha
made headlines back in 2012 when she told Ryan
Seacrest on his radio show that she had hooked up
with a supernatural being and thoroughly enjoyed
~~the spooky stuff~~

Many spectrophiles report experiencing ghost
sex as a vivid dream right as they're falling asleep
or waking up. This description has led some experts
to say spectrophiles are actually experiencing sleep
paralysis, which is characterized by an inability to
~~move, and sometimes hallucinations and weird~~
physical sensation.

Spectrophiles stand firm in their beliefs, however,
with ~~entire online communities dedicated to the~~
fetish. Despite a lack of empirical evidence, ghost
lovers aren't going anywhere. The phenomenon
gives the term ghosting a whole new meaning this
~~Halloween~~

INTRODUCING
THE PERFECT WOMAN

Janaina Prazeres















How do you like to begin your day? I love starting my day with a delicious, healthy, and light breakfast, with fruit, scrambled eggs and I also include manipulated supplements.

How did you get started in the modeling industry?
What inspired you to become a model? Fashion has always been present in my life, since I was a child. I have been in love with this incredible, exuberant, and beautiful world. I wanted to be part of it because I was born destined for this. It delights me, fascinates me, and makes me happy.

Best place you have ever been to in the world? Paris, I love the charm and elegance of the streets. Paris is a complete city as it has excellent restaurants, bars, art, and fashion, it is a vibrant life and a magical place.

What are some of your biggest dreams you hope to achieve? My biggest dreams is to continue being a happy, prosperous, and healthy person.

What does freedom of self-expression mean to you? It means independence, that is, being the owner of my actions and the exercise of being a woman.

How do you prepare physically and mentally for a photo shoot that will be seen by so many people? I prepare myself physically with an exercise routine, I do integrative medicine and aesthetic treatments. Mentally, I love reading and going to therapy because mental health is fundamental to having a full life.

What are your favorite aspects of modeling, and what challenges have you encountered along the way? I'm very eclectic, I like to vary styles depending on the moment and the occasion, always trying to feel good about myself and fulfilled. However, I have difficulty finding clothes that fit my body well, my waist is super thin and I like to emphasize my butt. Therefore, I also tend to create bespoke pieces.

Who are some of the models or influencers that you admire and draw inspiration from in your career? I love Kim Kardashian! She is my biggest inspiration.

What's one thing about yourself that your fans might be surprised to learn? I am extremely positive and high-spirited, I love making friends and living the best in life.

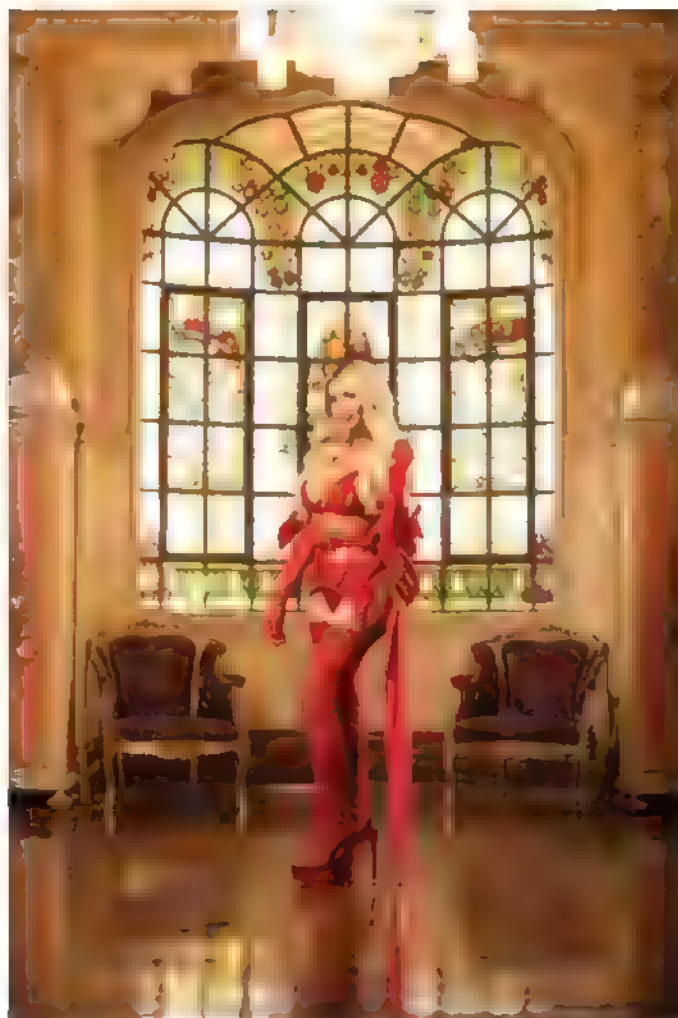
3 things that you can't go a day without. I don't go a day without talking to my mother, I love reading a good book and taking care of my aesthetics.

If you could choose one word to describe your journey as a model so far, what would it be, and why? Zeal. Because there is nothing better than taking care of yourself, physically and mentally.

What do you believe sets you apart from other models in the industry? My willpower to seek to make all my dreams come true. We must always dream big and have bold dreams, dreams keep us alive. I am a very determined person.

Can you share any exciting upcoming projects or collaborations you're involved in? There's news coming, I'll tell you soon! It's a surprise.

Where can our readers follow you on social to stay updated on what you're up to? My Instagram is @janaina3. There I share more about myself and my daily life.





Playboy Interview

Chris Rock

A candid conversation with America's best stand-up comic about why black people are so cool, why Marion Berry is scary and why there's nothing sexier than a big ass

INTERVIEW BY DAVID RENSIN

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID ROSE

If President Clinton isn't Chris Rock's biggest fan, he ought to be. Consider how the 34-year-old comedian defended the chief executive during a tour stop this past winter in Atlantic City.

"They let Clinton off last week. Let him off! That's right, just let him go," said Rock, pacing back and forth onstage, eyes wide with mock surprise. Suddenly, he stops. "Wait..

who's booing? What the fuck you booing about? How you gonna boo head? Have you really thought this over? What the fuck did Clinton do? He lied about a blow job so his wife wouldn't find out. Is that so fucking hard to figure out? You got to have a trial for that shit? Get the Supreme Court involved? You could have taken that to The People's Court."

Most comics would have stopped there

Not Rock. "Some of this is Hillary's fault. That's right. I put blame where blame is due. Women, you know your man better than anybody else. You know if you got the crazy, needs-a-blow-job-every-day man. Sometimes you got to save your man from himself. Sometimes you got to sacrifice your lips for the good of the country. Hillary let us all down. She's the first lady. She's supposed to



be the first one on her knees. Monica shouldn't have stood a chance. p'What you want, girl? Get out of here. I got this under control."

Rock certainly has things under control. For almost five years he's been the hottest comic in the country, the darling of the public and his peers, a book author, recording artist, movie actor and host of HBO's *Chris Rock Show*. Credit his fearlessness at tackling issues such as race, politics, relationships, doctors, insurance, taxes, family dynamics, porn, pumps, crack, black leaders, false role models and the difference between the mall white people go to and the one they used to go to. Despite his success, Rock makes regular visits to the Museum of Television and Radio to study the likes of Woody Allen, Richard Pryor, Ernie Kovacs, Flip Wilson, Don Rickles, Groucho Marx, Steve Martin and Charlie Chaplin. And he still hones his material before last-call audiences at comedy clubs. Then it's all taken to the concert stage where, as in his Emmy award-winning HBO special, *Bring the Pain*, Rock works the audience with almost evangelical fervor.

Offstage, Rock is surprisingly calm and unassuming. He's a watcher, a thinker, curious. "I don't have to be the smartest person in the room," he says. "You don't learn that way." In other words, he's personable but not easy to get to know. But he can explain that too: "The only people easy to get to know are drug dealers and prostitutes. No matter where I go, people ask, p'How come you're so quiet?" Even in the library where you're supposed to be quiet. But I don't want to waste my powers. If Superman flew around all the time he might not be able to save Lois when it counts."

Rock was born on February 7, 1965 in South Carolina. His father, Julius, a union trucker, and mother, Rose, moved the family to Brooklyn. Eventually they settled on Decatur Avenue in Bedford-Stuyvesant, on one of the nicer blocks in a notoriously bad part of town. The family was close, and Rock, as the oldest of six, quickly absorbed his parents' work ethic. He took on odd jobs and, as he got older, often accompanied his dad on rounds delivering the *New York Daily News*. He was also bused to a nearly all-white school, where he was regularly beaten up and came to learn the many epithets whites have for blacks. He didn't make it through high school—by choice.

Once, in 1983, when he was 18, working at Red Lobster and a huge Eddie Murphy fan, Rock waited in line at Radio City Music Hall to get a ticket to Murphy's show. But when he heard about an open-mike night at Catch a Rising Star, he left Murphy behind and headed to the club, tried out, made the cut and joined the comedy circuit. One night in 1987 it was Murphy's turn to watch Rock, and he liked what he saw. With Murphy's backing, Rock appeared on an HBO's *Uptown Comedy Express* special. In 1990 he followed in Murphy's footsteps on *Saturday Night Live*.

Three years and a couple memorable characters (including Nat X) later, Rock asked SNL executive producer Lorne Michaels to let him go his own way. The pressure to be the new Eddie Murphy had taken its toll. He also admits that he didn't work as hard on the show as he did at partying and spending his newfound money. Even so, he appeared in a few films (including *New Jack City*), was briefly on *In Living Color*, made an album (*Born Suspect*) and, in 1993, starred in the rap parody *CB4*, which he co-wrote and co-produced. It opened at number one at the box office, but from there both the film and Rock's career went downhill. He ended up right back where he started: playing little clubs. And there was another problem. His act had gone limp. One night in Chicago, upstaged by comedian Martin Lawrence, Rock came back to his senses. As he told *Vanity Fair*, "Martin just annihilated me. Blew my ass away. That was a pivotal moment, because I wasn't really prepared. I'd been working with too many white guys."

The reality check paid off. Rock recommitted himself to his craft, often traveling the country with comedian Mario Joyner, "the funniest man I know." (Joyner is also one of Jerry Seinfeld's best friends.) Rock took more risks onstage and started talking about things that really interested him. In 1996 *Politically Incorrect* host Bill Maher

asked Rock to be that show's correspondent at the presidential conventions. Rock also taped *Bring the Pain*, featuring his new strutting stage manner as well as his popular "Niggas vs. Black People" routine. It was only a small part of the special, and Rock doesn't do it anymore, but it hit home.

Rock followed the special with an album (*Roll With the New*), a best-selling book (*Rock This!*) and an HBO variety-talk show (*The Chris Rock Show*), now in its third season. He also relaunched a movie career, with roles in *Lethal Weapon 4*, Kevin Smith's *Dogma* and *Nurse Betty* with Morgan Freeman. He's writing films as well, with Paramount greenlighting his remake of *Heaven Can Wait*, called *I Was Made to Love Her*. Finally, there's another HBO special, *Bigger and Blacker*, taped at the Apollo Theater in Harlem, and a new album by the same name. And let's not forget his role as pitchman for 1-800-Collect and his playing the voice of Li'l Penny for Nike.

Playboy asked Contributing Editor David Rensin, who co-authored Rock's book, to hook up with the comedian while he toured to get ready for his HBO special. Rensin's report:

"Most people who don't know him think Chris Rock in private is just like he was in *Bring the Pain*: loud, in your face, wearing a silky silver jacket and unable to sit still. Nothing is further from the truth. Rock says he never wore that ensemble again. He's also more prone to lose himself in his Walkman than cut up after a show. Where many performers are super-energized and looking for trouble, Rock is easy-going and happy to watch a film on the tour bus with his players—Ali LeRoi, Lance Crouther and his wife, Robin Montague, and Wanda Sykes, all writer-performers on *The Chris Rock Show*. He may be the boss, but he acts like one of the gang."

"After a show at Princeton University, we traveled to the Trump Marina hotel and casino in Atlantic City. At two A.M. the troupe convened for breakfast in the coffee shop. Rock led a freewheeling dialogue that covered favorite music from the 1970s and 1980s, favorite comedians, sports, the neighborhood, relationships. Later, in the casino, Rock wanted to cut loose and gamble a bit, but then a phalanx of low-rollers approached for autographs. Said one obviously single woman, p'You're gorgeous. I want to marry you someday.' Smiling, then sighing, Rock begged off and said, 'My life has changed. I used to blend in around white people.'"

"We were scheduled to begin our first session after lunch in his hotel room, but at the last minute Rock decided we should go to the local mall for CDs and a radio, and do the interview as we shopped. We'd made mall runs together before, but this time there were no pals along—and no bodyguard. We entered on the upper level and hadn't been inside 30 seconds when we heard the first of what would become an afternoon full of variations on, p'Yo. It's Chris Rock. Is that Chris Rock? Hey man, how you doing?' and autograph requests. Rock motioned toward the tape recorder and politely declined—unless there were children involved—and just told me to keep walking and talking."

PLAYBOY: Everyone's staring.

ROCK: Keep walking. I'm from Brooklyn. If you come from a bad neighborhood you learn to notice everything around you. What I notice is there's no one in here who can whip my ass. Besides, I got you with me.

PLAYBOY: And you feel safe? All right, let's start with the accolades. *Vanity Fair*: "Funniest, smartest comic working today." *New York Post*: "Utterly fearless." *The Washington Post*: "His show is unfailingly funny." Lorne Michaels, "Chris is the shock of ideas." For a guy who only a few years ago called himself washed up, how much do you like what you hear?

ROCK: [Laughs] What do you want me to say? It's great. I'm glad they feel that way. They're all good sources and none of them had to say nice things about me before, including Lorne. I'm just glad I could

do something they like.

PLAYBOY: How has all the attention changed you?

ROCK: I feel like Travolta in *Phenomenon*, when he got zapped by the light. Nothing's going wrong. Yet, I still live in the same house—I just haven't been there much because I'm extremely busy. But when I go around my old neighborhood and see my old friends, the differences between me and them still seem minuscule. I had a good dad and another guy didn't; I didn't get high and another guy did. That's scary. I sometimes feel like I'm one bad break from being back there and never making it out in the first place.

PLAYBOY: What do you miss most about your old life?

ROCK: Being able to take a walk by myself. Now if I'm alone everyone assumes I want company. Being famous is like having big tits. People always stare. In some ways that's good, because a girl with big tits can go anywhere and people always want to do whatever they can for her.

PLAYBOY: Sure. In hopes of getting laid.

ROCK: With me I guess it's the hope of getting money or hanging out—and then getting laid. My friends are always trying to drag me somewhere so they can get laid. Tell anyone you're my manager and watch what happens. [Laughs] I guess I've got some huge tits right now. But that's okay. I deal with all of it because they're my fans. It's like each one bought a thread on this coat I'm wearing. They bought the tips of my shoelaces. They helped pay for everything I've got. So the handshakes, the hugs, they're good. People are just trying to connect. It could be much worse. PLAYBOY: As in no one's paying attention?

ROCK: No. As in they could be burning my football jersey and smashing my Heisman trophy.

PLAYBOY: How much does it bother you that O.J. is still able to go to the mall?

ROCK: I'm not happy about it. I'm not rejoicing. Yeah, we know he did it, but he's one guy I don't think is going to kill again.

PLAYBOY: When does celebrity get most weird for you?

ROCK: When I get to hear about which star someone in my family wants to fuck. When people want to know my mood before they speak to me. I used to see this around Eddie Murphy and Lorne Michaels. "How's he feeling? What's his mood?" It's hysterical. When I say something offhand and it comes back to me. If I'm mildly interested in something, my whispers are heard miles away. The next thing I know, someone is in my office wanting to make a deal. The other day I said, "You know, The PJs was funny last night." Two days later my manager gets a call. "They hear you like The PJs. They want you to be a voice on the show." For all I know I was overheard in an elevator. When people give me stuff I don't need. I get free food when there are homeless folks who can't get any. I get sneakers. I don't need sneakers; I can buy sneakers. It's all about big tits. And it's ironic that the guy who no one listened to, everybody listens to now. The guy everyone used to beat up, a lot of people are scared of now. The guy who couldn't get laid, everybody wants to fuck now.

PLAYBOY: That sounds like a positive development.

ROCK: I just wanted the opportunity to make people laugh in as many different forms as I could: books, albums, my TV show, as a producer, in the movies and, first and foremost, as a stand-up comic. All I wanted was options. And now I have them, because all being rich and famous really means is that you've got more options.

PLAYBOY: Didn't you once say that fame was bullshit?

ROCK: Here's what I meant. People say, "I want to be rich and famous like you." No, they just want to be rich. Believe me. Fame is only cool if you want to meet somebody.

PLAYBOY: And you have. We read about you in the gossip columns, at one big event or another, like Puffy Combs's birthday bash.

ROCK: I knew Puffy 10 years ago. I was a little sluggo-ing comedian and he used to drive some guy's car. I've known a lot of these people forever. Look at Lauryn Hill. To most people she just got famous. I did a gig with her and the Fugees seven years ago at some little college. I played Nintendo with Will Smith 10 years ago, in Philadelphia at his crib, when I was in town doing a gig at the Funny Bone for \$800.

Talented people tend to hang out together. They know who's got the stuff. If you respect someone's work it's worth a dinner or two. Plus, when you're all in the same business there's the safety factor. We don't need shit from each other. We're not put in the position to turn people down; that happens too many times when you hang out with people who don't do what you do. Does that make sense without making me sound like a snob?

PLAYBOY: Is that something you and your friends discuss?

ROCK: Who asked for what is one of the biggest topics of conversation. Everybody tries to top each other. "So-and-so wants me to help him buy a Ferrari." "So-and-so asked me for 50 large." "My uncle is trying to buy a fleet of school buses." Everybody's got some crazy tale. The best I ever heard was when a friend of mine, who will remain nameless, went on a date with a girl and had sex with her, and before she even left

she asked him to help her buy a house.

PLAYBOY: Did he?

ROCK: No. But I told him, "Your time together must have been really bad for her to say, 'You owe me now!'"

PLAYBOY: Will these observations ever end up as comic material?

ROCK: No. When I'm onstage I make \$300 a week—though maybe I should give myself a raise to \$500 for the millennium. No one wants to hear about my money. Nobody wants to hear about me hanging out with whoever's famous. Nobody wants to know about what a hassle it is sometimes to sign autographs. The fans just want me to be one of the guys. Be down. People want to hang out with their favorite comedian. They want to feel like he's the missing guy in their crew. "Fuck, I wish Chris was hanging." "Wouldn't it be great if Sandler was here tonight?" They want to feel comfortable with that guy. In their shoes, I did too.

PLAYBOY: How badly do you want Adam Sandler's kind of success?

ROCK: His success is nice. We both have the same philosophy. Work

"If Malcolm X were as small as Martin Luther King, he'd have believed in nonviolence, too. If Martin Luther King were as big as Malcolm X he'd have been talking about 'let me whup some ass.'"



work work, work work, work work work work Album, movie, movie, album, movie, album. Get it out there. He's also one of the funniest guys. As big as he is, he's still underrated. He's a great stand-up comedian. Sandler's like Steven Wright with a dick—not that Steven Wright doesn't have one. I mean Sandler has an observational quality like Steven Wright, but his one-liners tend to be raunchier than Wright's

PLAYBOY: And your approach to comedy is sort of like a fighter's.

ROCK: The crowd gives me a four-minute cushion. "Hey, he's famous. We saw him last month and he made us laugh." I try to hit them. Immediately I don't try to fluff it that much, because a man's behavior is dictated by his physicality. I'm like a lightweight fighter, so I tell more jokes than a big guy. I've got to throw a lot of jokes. If Malcolm X were as small as Martin Luther King, he'd have believed in nonviolence, too. If Martin Luther King were as big as Malcolm X he'd have been talking about "let me whup some ass." It's no coincidence that the little guy was nonviolent and the big guy was violent.

PLAYBOY: Why did you choose to become a comedian?

ROCK: It's the only good deed I can do. I've never been talented at anything else, like sports or school. The only other thing that sparked my interest as a kid was being a civil rights attorney, or a reverend—that is, if I could find a religion that didn't dog people out and wasn't on some level racist, sexist and homophobic. Yeah, I'd probably preach the gospel.

PLAYBOY: But your act is already more than jokes. As Lorne Michaels said, you're the shock of ideas.

ROCK: I'm just a comedian, man. Just a comedian. The media think I'm out there with an agenda. No. That's Jesse's job. That's Sharpton's job. Everybody's looking for the leader. Everybody's looking for the next guy, and they always try to pin it on entertainers and athletes. But I'm not a candidate, and I'm not a messenger.

PLAYBOY: So you say and no doubt mean, yet your fans take your observations to heart. And the critics see all sorts of wisdom in your observations.

ROCK: People also listen to Urkel. Oprah says what I say, in her own way. A million rappers: Ice Cube. Chuck D. Public Enemy. N.W.A. And they did it years ago. I just happen to be the quotemeister right now—people are repeating things I've said, in other contexts. I just talk about what interests me. That's the most important thing: Can I interest myself? I don't want to be bored up there, because you'll be bored if I'm bored. And I don't want to sound like other comedians. I don't want to have the airplane hunk about seat backs and tray tables.

PLAYBOY: So what's the gospel according to Chris Rock?

ROCK: [Pauses] If anything, I'm not a hater. I'm probably the only black comic who isn't homophobic, who doesn't have a big fag hunk in his act.

PLAYBOY: How do you feel about white people?

ROCK: I look at the individual. I probably could hate white people as a group, because when I went to school white kids would get together and beat the shit out of me. I'm still a little scared when I see whites in a group, but I've learned that all groups are stupid. What I hate is anyone who knows better yet chooses to be racist. On the other hand, if you don't know any black people and all you get is what you see in the news, I almost don't blame you for being a racist. But if you know

a cool brother down the block, if you know me and you're still a racist, then you're a fucking idiot.

PLAYBOY: But you're not afraid to make fun of blacks or whites.

ROCK: [Long pause, shakes his head] I hate that hunk of mine, sometimes.

PLAYBOY: The "I love black people but I hate niggas" routine?

ROCK: Yeah, I'm so tired of that shit. Sometimes that's all people write about me, like I'm a one-joke comic or Ritchie Valens, only known for "La Bamba." They ignore everything else I've said and focus on that one thing.

PLAYBOY: It's certainly received the most attention.

ROCK: But if I didn't have the relationship stuff in my act, I wouldn't sell as many seats. No way in the world I'm playing these big houses just off so-called political shit. The relationship stuff sells the tickets, along with the stuff about insurance and doctors and malls. I talk about things that the average man cares about, stuff I care about. I've got insurance. I'm paying my mother's insurance bills. I'm thinking about the hypocrisy of the whole thing. Even when I was a kid, when I had my first car, it was like, Let me get this straight: The worse the neighborhood you live in, the more insurance you have to pay? Women in the inner city have to pay more for diapers and milk be-

cause they have to get them at the minimart because no grocery will build there? How fucking ignorant is that injustice?

PLAYBOY: True, but why does that make the "I hate niggas" material any less important?

ROCK: [Sighs] It's just that I hate white reporters talking to me about it without ever having watched *Bring the Pain*. They always ask, "How does a black audience deal with that stuff you're saying?" Take a look at the show! Were there any white people there that night? Not many. Were people laughing? Yes. What's the fucking question again? I'm in the middle of Maryland. Not even D.C., but the middle of the ghetto, in a theater that we spent money on to make look better—and it's full of

black people. I purposely went into the hood to do it. But some writers act as if I did *Bring the Pain* in front of a joint session of Congress. I think what they're really saying is, "I like it, but how could black people possibly like it, since you're making fun of them?" Well, it looked to me like they were laughing. Whatever you see black people laughing at, that's what's funny to black people. It's like me going up to Garth Brooks after he plays the Grand Ole Opry and saying, "How do country people deal with your act?" Huh?

PLAYBOY: How are black audiences different from white audiences?

ROCK: For one thing, the black audience goes everywhere first. They dictate everything from music to comedy to fashion, they point to where the white audience is going to go. Who's going to be the hottest comedian in the year 2001? I don't know—but he's working in front of a bunch of brothers right now. Who'll be the hottest rapper? I don't know, but young black kids know right now. Black people are about the future. White people are all about the past and how to return to the fucking glory they had. Black makes everything cool. What are the Spice Girls without the black girl? Just three white bitches who can barely sing. What's the Rat Pack without Sammy Davis? A bunch of fucking alcoholics. My core audience is probably black, but I don't think white people want to see me water down my thing. The white

"I'm just a comedian, man. The media think I'm out there with an agenda. No. That's Jesse's job. That's Sharpton's job."

people who are into me aren't afraid. They want me to be me.

PLAYBOY: Perhaps the question you don't like stems from white journalists having to be so cautious. They can't get away with saying "nigger." They'd be crucified. So they don't understand when black people laugh at someone who does.

ROCK: White people can't go around saying "nigger." That's a rule. Black people can; it's like calling your kid an idiot. Only you can call your kid that. Someone else calls your kid an idiot, there's a fight. You know, I said some ill shit in that special. I did jokes about porn and killing the president and hitting women. I had a guy beating a woman, and her complaining about it on Oprah. But no one mentioned that to me. Here's why: Race is big. It's the last frontier.

PLAYBOY: Who takes the truth about themselves better, blacks or whites?

ROCK: Probably blacks. We're used to being criticized and we deal with it easier. We're always expecting the hit.

PLAYBOY: How concerned are you about media backlash? You're on top now, but that also makes you a target.

ROCK: I don't worry about the mainstream media. They don't have much to do with making black artists succeed. There's no successful

black artist without 90 percent of the black vote. Any black artist with longevity, black people already love, and he'd be successful—though maybe not stupendously—without the crossover. If white people had never gotten Richard Pryor he'd still have a big house and money. Bernie Mac, Jamie Foxx, Frankie Beverly, they all live really well. Steve Harvey lives really, really well.

PLAYBOY: Would black recognition be enough for you?

ROCK: Yeah.

PLAYBOY: So why the desire to cross over?

ROCK: Financial reasons. Black artists don't want white people to like them. That's real Uncle Tom. It's the money. Everybody wants to make the most dough they can because we're in an industry where you can be over at any moment.

The idea is to cross over to white dollars, not to white people.

PLAYBOY: What's the best career advice you ever got?

ROCK: Before I taped *Bring the Pain* I bumped into Andrew Dice Clay. Anybody who knows Dice knows he can't help but give you advice every time he sees you—good or bad. But when you really think about it, who knows more about doing an HBO special than Dice? Who's gotten more out of being on HBO than Dice? Who filled up Madison fucking Square Garden? He said, "Watch Rocky and you'll remember why you got started. Everything will come back to you." They say I'm big, but I can't ignore a guy who filled the Garden. And he was right. I watched Rocky and it all came into focus. It's the best inspirational movie in the world. All schoolkids should be forced to watch Rocky. The lesson is try your best, no matter what, and you'll feel good at the end. Be better than your best. That's my career philosophy. Buster Douglas was a bum. But one night he fought Tyson better than his best, and he won.

PLAYBOY: Do you have any advice for Tyson?

ROCK: Watch Rocky [laughs]. Stop drinking. Mike is insecure. The last time I bumped into Mike was at some show at Roseland. We ended up going to Jersey to a party. It was two or three in the morn-

ing, and we were both sitting there trying to figure out if we could have gotten our wives if we weren't rich. This big motherfucker and this little guy, both from Brooklyn, connected on the same thing. We couldn't figure it out. Neither one of us was confident enough. Both of us were like, "Nah, nobody likes us for us." It says nothing bad about our wives and everything about us.

PLAYBOY: You recently went to Richard Pryor's birthday party. What's he like these days?

ROCK: It's really sad. He can't talk. Richard fucking Pryor, the greatest orator, the greatest comedian of all time, and he can't talk. What the fuck is that? It's like Fred Astaire being paralyzed.

PLAYBOY: What made Pryor great?

ROCK: He was honest.

PLAYBOY: The same has been said of you. According to HBO president of programming Chris Albrecht, you can "get away with being honest in a way few people can."

ROCK: I don't get away with anything. I just do it. It has to be instinctual. The minute that I start to analyze my act, I'm dead.

PLAYBOY: Come on. Maybe you want to play it down, but you must think this stuff through.

"Alex and I weren't as close as we had been. But neither of us has had problems getting along with teammates before, so I don't see why we would have problems now. It gives the media something to write about, though."

ROCK: Sometimes when I come off the stage I feel like the Incredible Hulk, when he turns back into David Banner. Did I kill anybody? Did I hurt anybody? I feel like that a lot, especially when it's a good night. I get in a weird zone because my act gets my complete attention. In sex, my mind can drift, but onstage it's do or die. When I walk into a comedy club I want motherfuckers to be scared I'm going on. "Oh shit, I don't want to follow him." I don't want the he's-famous-let's-out-him-some-slack funny. When Rodney Dangerfield walks into the Improv, they know he's getting ready to bring the noise. It's like, get the fuck back! This guy is 70-something and he's going to blow everybody off the stage. That's what I want.

PLAYBOY: How do you feel

about once having been called the new Eddie Murphy?

ROCK: Every hot black guy is the new Eddie Murphy. But I think I've established myself as my own guy. The first time I heard it I felt a bit of pressure; more than, say, Damon Wayans or Sinbad did, because folklore has it I was discovered by Eddie Murphy. People were looking for that from me.

PLAYBOY: Is the folklore bullshit?

ROCK: The average person thinks I was driving a bus and Eddie said, "Hey, this guy is funny." I had been in the comedy business for a few years. Eddie said I was funny on camera and in print—which is a bigger thing than any manager or agent could do—and he got me on this show called *The Uptown Comedy Express*, an HBO special he developed and produced. When the funniest guy in the world says you're funny, well, you—

PLAYBOY: Feel like, holy shit, what do I do?

ROCK: I just did what I was doing and people said, "He's funny, but he's no Eddie Murphy."

PLAYBOY: But only a few years earlier you were 18 and standing in line at Radio City on your night off from a job at Red Lobster, waiting to get a ticket to Murphy's show, when you suddenly split to do open-



microphone night at Catch a Rising Star. Murphy was and is your hero, yet you blew off the show. What possessed you?

ROCK. Something called to me. Every comedian will tell you the same thing. There's no big revelation. It seemed like a better option than waiting in line.

PLAYBOY. Was it your first time onstage?

ROCK. Yeah. There was a guy on my block who co-managed R&B singer Freddie Jackson. He represented show business to me. I also knew Saturday Night Live was looking for people. So I told him, out of the blue, "Get me on Saturday Night Live." Obviously, I was an idiot at that point, thinking you could just get on Saturday Night Live. The guy said, "You have to go to the Comic Strip, you have to audition. You need to go to the clubs." I guess it put a little germ in my head—so one night I did it. Or maybe it was because I was at the end of a long-assed line and probably wasn't going to get in to see Eddie anyway.

PLAYBOY. How big a career jump was getting on Saturday Night Live?

ROCK. Huge. To this day, the biggest. It was the last break that actually changed my life. When I got on Saturday Night Live I moved from a studio apartment into a huge duplex, I bought a car, I helped my mother get a house. Nothing like that has happened to me since. Even today the quality of my life is pretty much the same. When I used to get \$50 or \$300 a gig, every gig would change my life. It meant I was going to eat differently, I might buy sneakers so I'd have a new wardrobe. Today the only changes are more artistic options, and a lot of white people speak to me.

PLAYBOY. What went wrong at Saturday Night Live?

ROCK. Lorne hired me because I was funny and because In Living Color had just come on. I don't think it was coincidence. The first year I was alone, which was perfect. If you're black you might as well be the only black person there. You're competing enough as it is to get a little screen time. Then it was me, Tim Meadows and Ellen Cleghorne. We all wanted to star in our own pieces, but we weren't all going to get on each show—even if all our stuff was great. The show is no different than society. But I'll never dog Saturday Night Live, because it's the best thing that's ever happened to me. Another problem is that I followed Eddie Murphy. Whatever I did was compared with him, and that's unfair. I had tough shoes to fill. I had the Larry Holmes gig.

PLAYBOY. What's your relationship with Eddie like these days?

ROCK. We're cool. I always looked at Eddie like my older cool cousin, the one, when you're a kid, that you can't wait to see because he's got the tapes and cool clothes. He's getting laid and he's got stories. I'm never going to be Eddie's equal, and friends have to be equals to be friends. But that said, we're better friends than we were before.

PLAYBOY. Didn't you also party a lot during your three years on Saturday Night Live, sometimes to distraction?

ROCK. We all partied. I also got a big-ass apartment, a convertible

Vette. What's cornier than a red Vette driving through Brooklyn? How obnoxious is that? I was ridiculous. Lorne Michaels told me, and he was right. "Everybody loses their first money. No matter who you are, you're going to lose your first money." That first hunk I got, though it couldn't set me up for life, could have helped. But I lost it, I spent it on shit I couldn't afford: a car, not paying taxes. My whole life was just trying to fuck girls I had no business fucking—and I succeeded on several occasions [laughs]. Ah, those were the days.

PLAYBOY. Sounds like you miss them.

ROCK. I miss the innocence. Otherwise I was tired, I looked like shit. In pictures of me back then I look like I was on the pipe.

PLAYBOY. You were hot, left Saturday Night Live, made a couple movies and then you were gone. You couldn't even get an agent. What happened? How did you work your way back?

ROCK. After Saturday Night Live, I co-wrote, produced and starred in CB4. Probably made \$18 million. We did it with Brian Grazer and Ron Howard's company, Imagine. Ron Howard was in the movie, but he cut himself out. He saw how shitty the movie was and said, "Hey,

I can't be in this." In his scene he says, "When I first heard the song 'Sweat of My Balls' " Ron Howard saying "sweat of my balls" is pretty funny. Cut to three years later and I get a call to do Sgt. Bilko with Steve Martin. I thought, great, but it was essentially an extra part. Two times. I felt like shit, but you've got to do what you've got to do. A lot of guys wouldn't go to the audition. I do what I've got to do. The worst gig in show business is better than the best job out of it. I would have been the stand-in for the extra if I had to. And if I didn't take that extra part I wouldn't be where I am right now. That same year I did a guest shot on Fresh Prince of Bel Air. It was a horrible episode. I had to be Will Smith's ugly date, so I was in drag. Barely funny. I had to do it, though. From Saturday Night Live to New Jack City to CB4 to being dressed up like an ugly bitch for Will Smith.

PLAYBOY. Did you have to kiss him?

ROCK. No, but I'm glad they offered me the part. I needed it at the time. And guess what? People on the street were going, "Hey, I saw you on Fresh Prince of Bel Air," "Hey, I saw you in Sgt. Bilko." It kind of kept me alive. It's not shoveling shit, but I definitely went backward to get forward. I did Sgt. Bilko because it was Grazer, Steve Martin, Dan Aykroyd, Phil Hartman. I got to be around all those guys, even if it was only for two days. There was some value in doing it. Association brings assimilation, as my mother says.

PLAYBOY. How often do you get back to the old neighborhood?

ROCK. I still talk to people there. But one of the last times I went around I almost got carjacked. This guy was following me; I ran a light and he ran the light. When you grow up in Bed-Stuy you have an extra sense for trouble. The next thing I know, I'm on a high-speed chase with three cars behind me. I was probably going about 60 or 70 miles an hour through the streets of Brooklyn, running lights.

PLAYBOY. What would have happened if they'd caught you?

"Black makes everything cool. What are the Spice Girls without the black girl? Just three white bitches who can barely sing. What's the Rat Pack without Sammy Davis Jr.? Just a bunch of fucking alcoholics."

ROCK: They would have taken me to my crib, made me open up, taken everything, duct taped me and maybe killed me. They wanted my shit. And kidnapping's big. This is what's going on now. The only guys my age with dough who aren't entertainers sell drugs. Drug dealers keep their money in their house. I don't keep money in mine, but these young guys probably think I have a million dollars under my bed.

PLAYBOY: Sounds like you can't really go home again.

ROCK: I'm not going back there like "look at me." I like to sit on the stoop and talk. Usually it's okay. When I first get there it's an immediate, "Chris is here!" But that always happened no matter what job I had. As far as my neighborhood is concerned, I made it 10 years ago when I was in the movie *I'm Gonna Get You Sucka*. Do you know how far that is from Bed-Stuy and hanging out watching my friends sell lactose as coke? Or making crack: cocaine, lactose, vitamin B-12, a little baking soda. The common Friday night thing was to get with a bunch of friends at six o'clock. But then people started getting high and no one would go anywhere. It would start with the first beer, to the first joint, to the first snort, to freebasing. Every fucking Friday. I never got or get high, thank God.

PLAYBOY: Did that self-destructive experience make it any easier for you to understand Chris Farley's death?

ROCK: No, I took it really hard. He was a great friend. A good, jolly—I know that's a fat word—guy to be around. He needed hugs but he was quick to give them too. When I was off the show, with no career, he and Sandler were the only guys who'd call to see how I was doing. Farley was way funnier than we've ever seen him be. He was more like W.C. Fields than the character he usually played. He had a "get away from me kid, you bother me" funny mean streak, but then he'd give the kid a big hug. But in movies he always played this fat guy who didn't know any better, who straightened up at the last minute.

The last time I saw him I pretty much had to get rid of him. I was in Chicago, on tour, and Chris came to see me. He was so fucked up. He was screaming. He wanted more booze. We had made plans, but I had to say, "You know what? I'm going to bed." It was only midnight. Right then he kind of straightened out for a minute: "Come on, Roker. Come see my apartment. Come on, Roker." I couldn't, and that's the last time I saw him. He died a month after that.

I miss Farley a lot. Phil Hartman too. It made for a really shitty year, losing both of them. The worst thing that they did was try to make other people happy offstage. They went out of their way for other people for the sake of their own happiness, and it killed both of them.

PLAYBOY: What was your relationship with Hartman like?

ROCK: Phil was a mentor. He was the most prepared guy at Saturday Night Live. He could also show you about the good life. Sometimes he'd call me into his office and say, "Hey, look at this picture of my new boat." "Hey, here's the house I'm buying. You work hard, you

can get this too." But Phil had a weird marriage. He was always going through some shit with it, and I never liked to spend time with them as a couple. Every now and then he'd talk about it. I remember him saying, "Okay. If I lose half my shit I'll have to be on the show another three years." In part because of what happened, I'm really into my own happiness and my own comfort now in a way I wasn't before. I'm probably a rougher person to be around than before they died. I would never rock the boat. I'd go along with the program even if I was miserable. The old me would take shit for a while and then explode. After Farley and Hartman died, and died not happy, the idea of toeing the company line made me think, Fuck this. I'm more assertive now. I've found the courage to say no. They say life is short. No, it's not. Life is long. Life is excruciatingly long if you make bad decisions and do things you don't want to do.

PLAYBOY: Let's talk about what you want to do—and what you have done for three seasons: *The Chris Rock Show*. Why did you want to try talk on cable, particularly when you could have had your own sitcom?

ROCK: I had nothing else happening at the time. I was bubbling under, doing *Politically Incorrect*, doing *Li'l Penny*. I had done *Big Ass Jokes*, which won the Cable Ace award. I was on a little upswing. It was HBO's idea. It was like, whoa, get my own show? This is great. We made the deal before *Bring the Pain*, and the success of the special just made things go quicker.

PLAYBOY: You're a TV interviewer now. Who's your role model?

ROCK: Bob Costas. Best in the world. I saw Bob Costas interview Little Richard once. At the time Little Richard was a fucking joke to me. Just a clown. When Costas got through with him, I was Little Richard's biggest fan. I saw Bob do that with a lot of people. He had all the best questions.

PLAYBOY: What have you learned?

ROCK: I look at an interview like I look at a woman I'm trying to

get with. You have to avoid the obvious, especially if you're not a good-looking guy. I'm not, so it's all going to be verbal. If she's tall, don't mention it. If her name is Eve, don't say a joke with Adam in it. The second rule is to never ask a question if you know the answer. If somebody's got a hit movie, "Boy, your movie's really big. How does it feel?" What are they going to say? They're going to say it feels great. Why ask that? Rule three is you can get away with a lot if you say "with all due respect."

PLAYBOY: When you interviewed Magic Johnson why did you concentrate on his HIV? What wasn't obvious about that?

ROCK: Who has asked Magic Johnson, "How has it affected your business?" Even gave Magic one of those hard-to-ask questions: "Do women still hit on you?" His ego wants to say yes, but he has to say no. He kind of went in the middle of it: "Women like successful men." That's what you're looking for. He was great. He was the best guy I've probably had on this year. [Smiles] You know, I think he's got a new strain of AIDS, the kind that makes you gain weight and make money.

"Everybody wants to make the most dough they can because we're in an industry where you can be over at any moment. The idea is to cross over to white dollars, not to white people."

PLAYBOY: Why wasn't he any good when he did the interviewing?
ROCK: Magic Johnson is supposed to suck at being a talk show host just like I'm supposed to suck at being point guard for the Los Angeles Lakers. It's no dis to him. He gave it a good shot.

PLAYBOY: Will former D.C. mayor Marion Barry ever come on your show—especially after you made fun of him in *Bring the Pain*?

ROCK: I bumped into Marion Barry. He shook my hand. He said I shouldn't do the jokes. And as I looked in his eyes I realized, if he wasn't the mayor or a public figure, he'd beat the shit out of me. He's not the mayor right now. If I bumped into Marion Barry again he'd probably kick my fucking ass. No doubt in my mind. If nobody was around, Marion Barry would beat the shit out of me.

PLAYBOY: So that's why you have a bodyguard?

ROCK: Yes. Just for Marion Barry [laughs].

PLAYBOY: What's your take on the tragedy at Columbine High in Colorado?

ROCK: It's a big gun problem. And you know, one kid was on Prozac, but the toxicology report found no Prozac in him. I don't want to sound insensitive, but what ever happened to just being crazy? Everyone's looking for reasons, but no one's mentioned that maybe those guys were just fucking nuts. When I was a kid, those kids would have been put on a yellow bus and sent to a little classroom away from everybody, and nobody would have been shot. When I went to school, there were probably a couple kids who didn't belong, but no one got shot.

PLAYBOY: Maybe it's just frustrated middle-class white kids with access to guns who don't know how else to deal with not being popular.

ROCK: Right. Black people can't go, "I'm going to buy machine guns." They'd never leave the store. The cops would be called immediately. You can't buy any bomb-making stuff either if you're black. You can't even say "bomb" if you're black. As soon as you say "bo" you're arrested. B-o. You don't even get to the m. It's true! There are no black serial killers, right? You know why that is? Because a brother does one murder and they get him. It's like we're fucking suspects for everything. The white man gets the benefit of the doubt. I'm sure there are black people who would love to be serial killers, but they've never been given the chance. It's really sad. The law comes down on us too fucking hard.

PLAYBOY: Can the media and the internet and goth music be blamed for what happened?

ROCK: Blame the media? What was Hitler listening to? How come no one ever questions what Hitler was listening to? What movie did Hitler see that fucking set him off? He was just a crazy, evil guy. This whole "listened to" thing is bullshit to me. If you're dumb enough to kill somebody because you listen to Marilyn Manson, then we ought to get you early. We ought to eliminate you right away. What's Milosevic listening to? He's killing everybody, and I'm sure he's not listening to Marilyn Manson. What were they listening to during feudalism? The only people happy about those kids being shot are Jon-Benet's parents. They're like, "Hey, boy, now they're going to leave us alone." [Pauses] That's a joke.

PLAYBOY: Let's move on. Your movie career is in high gear. Besides the stuff we've seen you in, what are you being offered?

ROCK: Mostly con men. A numbers runner in Beverly Hills. Or I steal cars in Beverly Hills. That's the big thing: a fish out of water. You know what? I've got money and I'm famous and when I'm in Beverly Hills I am a fucking fish out of water. I walk into Barney's and I can afford whatever I want, but I'm still a freak. Jerry Seinfeld walking through Bensonhurst is a fish out of water. You don't need to be a fucking drug kingpin to be a fish out of water. Eddie called me a couple months ago and said, "I see what you're doing, the supporting

actor thing here and there. Don't do that no more. You have to star in your next movie. Now's the time. Strike while the iron is hot. Don't fucking blow this."

PLAYBOY: Did you take his advice?

ROCK: Yes. I can't just wait around to be cast. The really successful guys are the ones who develop their own shit. So I co-wrote a script with my guys, and Paramount greenlighted it and we're going to start shooting in January.

PLAYBOY: What's it about?

ROCK: It's a remake of *Heaven Can Wait* or *Here Comes Mr. Jordan*. It's called *There Goes Mr. Rock* [smiles]. No, it's called *I Was Made to Love Her*.

PLAYBOY: You're in Kevin Smith's newest film, *Dogma*, as Rufus, the 13th apostle. The movie's subject matter—a critique of Catholicism—has caused a fair amount of controversy. Is that what attracted you to the project?

ROCK: Kevin's other movies, *Clerks* and *Chasing Amy*, just spoke to me.

PLAYBOY: What was it like working with Smith?

ROCK: Kevin holds the most intense rehearsals. When you get to the set, your lines and blocking have to be second nature. You're prepared. You're in shape. It takes hours—morning until night. I wanted to do it, especially since I'm not an actor like the other people in the movie. Matt Damon and Ben Affleck, Linda Fiorentino, Alan Rickman, Salma Hayek, I need the extra work and it was like free acting school. It's definitely the best work I've done. It broke me out of all my moves.

PLAYBOY: How did that compare to your *Lethal Weapon* experience?

ROCK: In the beginning I was really scared because it was the fourth one, like *Alien 4* and *Batman 4*. Part of what convinced me is that the script turned out good. Also, Joel Silver admitted to me that number three wasn't all that great. I figured, okay, if you're going in with that attitude, four is going to be okay.

PLAYBOY: How much did you have to bulk up?

ROCK: I just had to fight my ass off and get my lines up. I don't mean that in a bad way, but I was pretty much an extra. *Lethal Weapon* was a weird movie. I'd been filming for a month, or at least I'd been on the set for a month, and I hadn't done anything. Then, one day, the whole cast did *The Rosie O'Donnell Show*, and I did well. I killed 'em. But I'm a comedian. I'm supposed to do better than Danny Glover and Mel Gibson on a comedy show. When Joel Silver and Dick Donner saw it they said, "We've got to get him in the movie more!" It's like I'd inadvertently auditioned for a movie I was already in. From then on it was like, "Hey, we've got this scene for you." "Hey, what about this scene?"

PLAYBOY: In *Nurse Betty* you work with Morgan Freeman. Do older black men want to mentor you?

ROCK: Morgan's more of a mentor than Danny. I guess I look for it. I ask questions. Maybe I'll linger longer than I should. My dad's dead and I love guys my dad's age. "Tell me something I don't know, please." Any black guy in his 50s or 60s, I'm like, "Please talk to me. Please." Danny is kind of eccentric, also smart and well educated. He knows African history, is very politically active. He told me about his college days, about the Panthers. It's a perspective I'm just not going to get from a white guy. In *Nurse Betty* Morgan Freeman has to kiss someone. Turns out it's the first time he has had to kiss a woman on-screen—and he's 60-whatever years old! That's got to be hard. Morgan is one of our best actors and, due to petty racism, no one's ever paired him with a woman, ever. Morgan fucking Freeman. You know how many ugly white guys get women in movies? When he told me I couldn't believe it.

PLAYBOY: Which of his movies is your favorite?

ROCK. Believe it or not, the most significant Morgan moment for me, and this sounds crazy, is *Deep Impact*. He plays the president of the United States, he's a black guy, and no one said shit. His color is never mentioned in the movie or in reviews. He is such a commanding presence that it's obvious he's the president. I don't think there's another black actor who could play the president without it being a big deal.

PLAYBOY. According to you we already have a black president: Bill Clinton.

ROCK. Yes, but I said it two years before all this impeachment bullshit, because of how much he was persecuted. I hate hearing people saying it now.

PLAYBOY. Why?

ROCK. Because after the Monica Lewinsky thing it was used to make it sound like this. Since Clinton—our black president—has low morals, so do my people. That's not what I meant. In an interview with *The New York Times*, the reporter asked me about Clinton and really tried hard to get me to say that. "Why do blacks support Clinton?" "We feel persecuted," I said. "We feel overwatched." He wanted me to say, "Because we all cheat" or whatever.

PLAYBOY. Most blacks supported Clinton.

ROCK. Blacks supported Clinton because Clinton supported blacks. It's that simple. Clinton appointed black people without making a fucking big deal out of it. He just did it. Any time the Republicans want to show off they say, "Hey, we've got J.C. Watts here! We've got a black guy." They have to point it out, which is racist in itself. Let's just be people Clinton hires black people and doesn't say shit. If one fucks up, he'll hire another one. He'll hire the best person for the job, whatever their skin color.

PLAYBOY. Do you think Clinton committed perjury?

ROCK. Clinton was on trial for lying about something that wasn't even a crime. There was

no crime committed before he had to answer the questions. That's what they tried to take him down for. That's ridiculous. Perjury because he didn't want to say he fooled around? Do you get an extra sentence if you tell the judge, "I wasn't speeding"? That's some shit they made up for John Gotti and Al Capone. Clinton is not Al Capone. PLAYBOY. You mentioned Oklahoma Representative J.C. Watts. Do the words black Republican bother you?

ROCK. Not theoretically. It just confuses me that they want to hang out with guys who clearly don't like black people. Don't they realize that white Republicans are just letting them hang out so nobody can say they don't have any black guys around? It's a bold move on his part. It's nothing special to be a black Democrat, so that's one way to make a splash.

PLAYBOY. How did he do on your show?

ROCK. Even though he played to an uptown crowd that was probably 99.9 percent Democrat, he had the fucking audience. And he worked

it. He explained his position in a coherent way that people could understand. I got some jabs in, but he had the audience—until he fucked up because he didn't know who George Clinton is [laughs]. I asked, "What do you do when George Clinton comes to town?" He said, "Who's George Clinton?" and the air went out of the studio.

PLAYBOY. How much does it bother you when you don't have the crowd?

ROCK. I've got the crowd. It's my show. It doesn't matter. That's why a lot of talk show guys fuck up. They think they have to get every joke. I figure if they like the guest, they like me. If everybody's funny, I'm funny. Do you want to be Magic Johnson and pass the ball and get everyone involved or do you want to be someone who scores 80 points a game but doesn't win shit? When Michael Jordan started passing the ball he started winning. Johnny Carson is the greatest assist man in the history of the game. The biggest mistake guys make is thinking they have to be the only funny one on their show. When I had on Darryl Hughley, he killed. He was so funny. That meant I looked great.

"Being famous is like having big tits. People always stare at you. In some ways that's good, because a girl with big tits can go anywhere she wants and people always want to do whatever they can for her."

PLAYBOY. Speaking of assists, why did you decide to fund the Howard University Lampoon?

ROCK. We need new black writers. It's the only way for us to get decent TV shows and movies. We can't sit around waiting for white guys to write good black shit. I'm reading submissions now. Then I'm going to assemble and edit the first issue.

PLAYBOY. Do you like any of the stuff that you've seen?

ROCK. Most of it's okay-to-bad, but that's how it is with all art. I figure if the writer is 18 and I get hold of him now and work on the bad habits, he might be a real writer in a year or two.

PLAYBOY. You're far more sophisticated than these kids. Can you let them be who they are?

ROCK. Yeah. I know they're kids. I'm not looking for stuff for my show. This is a college comedy paper. That's right: I grade papers. I'm Professor Rock.

PLAYBOY. What is the worst

job you had as a kid?

ROCK. [Laughs] I used to clean up dog shit. No one walks their dogs in the freezing New York winter; they just let them shit in the backyard. When the spring thaw came there were a bunch of people on the block with shit all over, and I was the shit boy. The phone would ring "Hey, can you come over and clean up my backyard?" They wouldn't say "clean up the shit," but I knew what time it was.

PLAYBOY. How old were you?

ROCK. Probably 12, 13. I took any job I could get. I liked having my own job. That's why sometimes it's weird to hear, "You're rich, you have all this now." I've always had more money than my friends because I've always worked.

PLAYBOY. How do you explain the early work ethic?

ROCK. My dad worked all the time, so I figured I should. It wasn't even the money. If you're a little boy, you want to be a man. And to me, a man worked. I shoveled snow when it was cold and shit when

it thawed. And you know what? It wasn't fun, but if I had to shovel shut again I wouldn't waste a day. Back then I never said, "How dare this happen to me!" I was a kid; I was supposed to be shoveling shit.

PLAYBOY: Do you own a dog today?

ROCK: My wife got one about a year ago. But I'm not cleaning shit no more.

PLAYBOY: How about having kids?

ROCK: I'm not ready.

PLAYBOY: Does the pressure your dad faced—and died of—to support a family scare you?

ROCK: I can afford a kid, but I don't want another job right now, let's put it that way. On the other hand, I'd be a real good dad, and I'd probably stop doing comedy on some level and become the guy doing it all for his kids. I used to look at my dad and think, What does he really want to do? Does he really want to come home all tired? He was beat. Beat the fuck down. We'd be out there playing stickball or whatever and he'd try to throw the ball at you. He'd throw it twice and his arm would fall off. He had to go in the house and rest. He was just tired a lot. I don't want to be that fucking tired.

PLAYBOY: Aren't you anyway?

ROCK: Not like him. I'm sure my father wanted a family to take care of and to get the love you can only get from a family. But, at the same time, he worked every fucking day. I haven't really done anything for all this shit I have. My dad worked. He supported people. He had kids. The kids wanted to go to school, the kids wanted bikes. The wife wanted something else. I work, but I'm not under the stress my dad was under. All my stress is based on worrying how I'll be perceived if I do bad work. It's not the same. I'll still eat, I really miss my dad. His death changed me, made me go into a shell. I'm still not out of. Made me take more risks because it could be over in a second. It makes me sad that he didn't live to see what I've done. He would've eaten it up. We'd be going to the fights; we'd have season tickets to the Mets. My dad would be at the Dodgers' spring training right now in Vero Beach. If he were still around, I would have made it all happen.

PLAYBOY: How much does your mom enjoy your success?

ROCK: She's having a ball. She has a house in South Carolina, runs a day care center. She never shies away from doing stuff. I have to tell her not to. "What do you mean you're doing Ricki Lake?" [Pauses] My whole family is doing fine. They're all working. Brian works on the show; he's a production assistant and he's worked his way up. I'm not one who likes to pay people to do nothing, to just hang out with me. My brother Andre just bought a truck to haul garbage from New York to Pennsylvania. He has the steadiest gig as far as I'm concerned. I have the shakiest job in the family. But I can still appreciate what's happened to me and to my comfort level. The difference between me and my wife is that she complains about the maid and I can't believe I have a maid. I'm dumbfounded. I like that I can buy two slices of pizza. I've never been hungry in my whole life, but if

you want more, you should be able to get more.

PLAYBOY: On the subject of getting some, we've noticed on your show that you seem to have a fondness for Latin women. Would you care to explain?

ROCK: Gorgeous women. Look at them. Have you ever been to the Puerto Rican Day parade? It's the most beautiful thing in the world. They are beautiful people. I love my people but boy—

PLAYBOY: Latina for you is exotic?

ROCK: It's exotic. American jails are filled with men over drug offenses and shit. Latin jails are filled up with men going crazy over their women. They are passionate about their women. If you fuck with them they'll lose their mind and kill you. Why? Their women have the best pussy in the world. Puerto Rican girls, man. Gorgeous. In bed it's "Mami," "Papi." What's better than some woman calling you Papi?

PLAYBOY: And you would know from experience?

ROCK: I've been called Papi a couple times, but long, long ago.

PLAYBOY: What do you love physically about black women?

ROCK: Probably the black ass. I hate women who hide the big ass. Don't hide the big ass. It's for all of us. Share this gift. Share your big ass with all of us. We don't have to touch it or anything, but don't hide

the big ass. Let us see it. Let us worship it. Let us pay it compliments. Let us tip our hats to the big ass. Love the big ass. And I'm not alone. Brothers love ass. There was an episode of *Real Sex* on HBO. They went from a black strip club to a white strip club. It was so funny. The white strip club was all about tits. The black strip club, ass. It was all about ass.

PLAYBOY: When you look in the mirror now, what do you see?

ROCK: A skinny guy who needs to get his teeth fixed. I could also use an extra 15 pounds.

PLAYBOY: Let's wrap this up. Bill Cosby blazed the trail for Richard Pryor, who opened it up for Eddie Murphy, who set the stage for you. Will the success you've had make it tougher or easier for the next guy?

ROCK: I hope it will be easier, but maybe tougher artistically, like Richard Pryor made it tough. He did stuff 20 years ago that no one has matched, partly because he's brilliant and partly because he got to do it first.

PLAYBOY: What did you do first?

ROCK: I can't say without sounding like an idiot. [Pauses] I talked about race in a different way; I'll go that far.

PLAYBOY: Are you worried about the next new guy?

ROCK: I never look at anything as a competition. Someone else's success never comes out of my paycheck. I don't need my friends to fail for me to succeed. To me it's just, "Let's do good work." The function of the comedian is to get as many laughs as he can by doing whatever works for him. Everybody wants to buy his mother a house. Whatever you do to get that house is the right thing. We all do our own things, from Dice to Eddie Murphy putting on a leather suit. One of the happiest times in my life was when I was eight years old and my friends and I had cool bikes—and they were all the same bikes. I was happy because everyone was equal.





INSTANT
ATTRACTION

Anna *Siradze*

Instagram @anna_universe2021

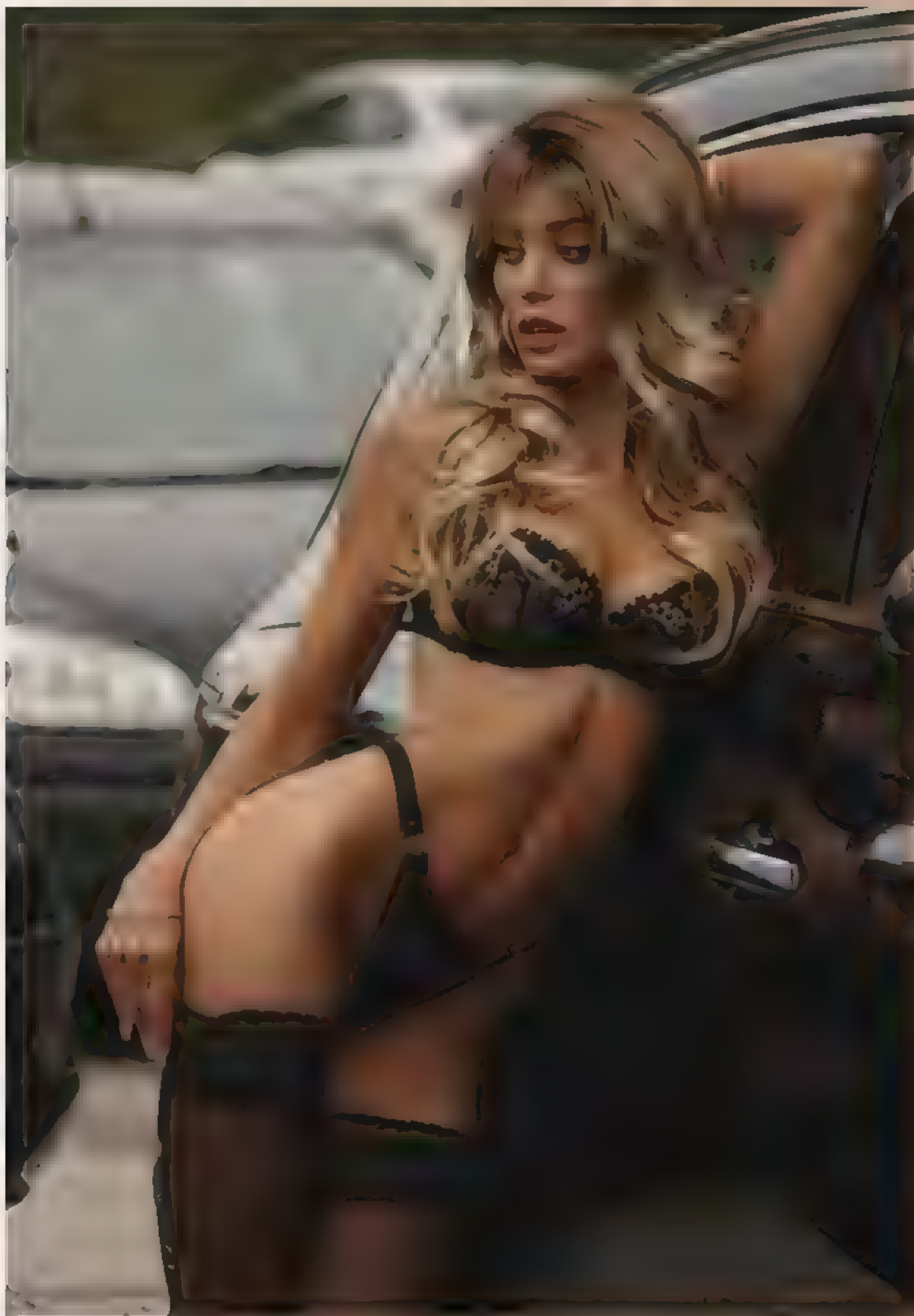
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Model Yulia Ostapenko | @yulia_ostapenko
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Anna Siradze
Mrs Universe 2021, model,
philanthropist









How did you get started in the modeling industry? What inspired you to become a model? My work in the modeling industry began in 2014. It was this year that my friend and I took part in the company and won my first beauty contest.

What is the best experience you have in the industry? Participation and victory in the first city beauty contest is undoubtedly the most exciting experience for me. Later, participating in much larger competitions, I did not experience the same emotions as the first time. It was not just a competition, it was a kind of school of life. The participants were not competitors, they were friends. I am still friends with many of them to this day. Throughout the entire preparation, which lasted about 6 months, we were one big family.

Can you share any exciting upcoming projects or collaborations you're involved in? The most exciting and touching projects for me are always charity. Orphanages, nursing homes, hospitals where there are seriously ill orphans, families with sick children who are in vital need of help - this evokes the most complex and deepest feelings.

What's one thing about yourself that your fans might be surprised to learn? I have secrets - do not drink alcohol. Never and not in any quantity. I do not smoke. I try to eat less red meat and, if possible, exclude sweets. I

play sports, sing a lot, and try not to take everything to heart.

How do you prepare physically and mentally for a photo shoot that will be seen by so many people? The main advice is to clearly set a goal for yourself and not deviate from it. Remember, as life experience shows, the more difficult and thorny the path to a dream, the more likely it is that the right path is chosen.

Who are some of the models or influencers that you admire and draw inspiration from in your career? All strong women inspire me because being strong is unnatural for a woman. And if a woman was able to deceive nature and at the same time live harmoniously, this is worthy of respect.

Are there any models or fashion icons who inspire you? I don't follow fashion and trends at all. In clothes, I prefer minimalism and black.

I don't even wear jewelry.

How do you balance your professional career with your personal life and relationships? My personal life does not suffer at all, because I am not a fan of public events. I'm a homebody. I can attend some important events once or twice a year, but nothing more.

What is the most valuable lesson you've learned in your career as a model? I realized that even the most cherished and seemingly impossible dream is just a clearly defined goal and a clearly thought-out strategy

for its implementation.

Can you share some of your favorite beauty and fashion tips? Three main secrets - Protect your skin from the sun all year round. A sufficient amount of water is consumed. Adequate amount of sleep.

What are your go-to fashion staples or must-have items in your wardrobe? I am a lover of a basic, monochromatic wardrobe. All beautiful evening dresses and jewelry are just for going out.

Thanks so much for your time, Where can our readers follow you on social to stay updated on what you're up to? I have a large number of subscribers and fans. Therefore, I try to respect the attention shown on their part and maintain social networks, where I try to share a small part of my life.





A stethoscope is positioned diagonally across the frame, with its chest piece in the lower right and its tubing extending towards the upper left. The background is a solid dark blue.

Organization Spotlight: California Black Women's Health Project

Our healthcare system fails to protect black women. This organization is pushing for a future where black women can visit the doctor without fear.

AMITA LITTLE



The moment you step into a doctor's office you entrust doctors, nurses and clinicians with your vulnerability. You're counting on them to provide you with fair treatment, dignified care and hopefully some healing. That moment can be daunting enough for anyone, but the burden can increase multifold if you're black and a woman. Being a black woman, I often feel myself bracing in the waiting room, revving up, knowing I'll have to fight to be listened to and acknowledged.

Health disparities are more than a frustration; they can be deadly. Black women are three to four times more likely to die from pregnancy than white women. And you can't outrun the systemic racism of our healthcare industry with doctorates or six-figure incomes. This alarming statistic persists across incomes and education levels.

"I don't really like to talk about implicit bias," Sonya Adam, the CEO of the California Black Women's Health Project, explains over a Google Hangouts. "I talk about explicit bias, because if you are causing harm to another human being who's in your care, that is not implicit. It is explicit." The mission of CABWHP is advocating for policies and practices that protect the physical and mental well-being of black women and girls. Since 1994, it has fought against black women's health disparities through education, research and community organizing. In this era of increased attention to black lives, Playboy spoke with Adam about what Americans need to do to ensure that black women aren't left behind.

How do we turn this moment we're in into a movement? I'm already seeing Black Lives Matter disappear from my social media feeds. Everyone was all about it for a hot minute, and then it was back to regularly scheduled programming for a lot of them.

We recognize that this could be a fad or a phase, and certainly hope it's not. The opportunity to turn it from a moment into a movement really does come from the systems and the structures that are impacting lives. It comes from the corporate sector. It comes from the public sector. It comes across the various social institutions. Sometimes we think it's just the on-the-ground activists who make it into a movement and continue it, but it doesn't become fully adapted into the fabric of our lives until our major sectors adapt it. That's where the real stickiness takes place.

You can have hashtags and people all over social media talking to each other, but when you're able to make change at an institutional level, that is how you change things from a moment to a real movement. Black Lives Matter is not new. Yet when you have

a corporation that is posting, tagging, highlighting, creating commercials, that's when you reach someone who otherwise would not have thought to connect with it.

How would you describe the importance of CABWHP to someone who is unfamiliar with it?

California Black Women's Health Project was born out of wanting to elevate the voices of black women around health and wellness, around the time when the public health movement was uplifted in the late 1970s and 1980s. We wanted to ensure that the issues impacting our health—a lot of which encompass racism and the disparities we face in the healthcare system—were centered.

Black women are the root of our communities, as we are the administrative and health heads of our families. Our roles as mothers, sisters and daughters put us in a position to uplift the need for better health for our loved ones and better health for ourselves. We train black women to be health advocates, and we push for policies to improve our access to health.

Even with all the activism that's happening right now, I feel like black women—black trans women especially—are left out of the conversation. Breonna Taylor received attention only after George Floyd's murder went viral. Could you speak on the lack of intersectionality in mainstream activism, and how you've encountered that in your own work?

Black women's lives are the intersection of everything. We face issues around misogyny, racism, sexuality and gender identity. We face the structural and historic challenges that discount us, dismiss us and ignore our voices. We are forced to rally together and sometimes have to shout to be heard. We are a proud sisterhood. The disparities around the death rate and the abuse of women in our community is frightening. The loss of life for our trans sisters is never even reported in the news.

We have black women entering the healthcare system in their perinatal phase who then find themselves in frightening situations at a time when you are supposed to be celebrating something beautiful, magical and wonderful. If you're a lesbian and you come in with your partner, you enter into a system where you are treated differently and that relationship isn't respected. If you are trans and you're in the birthing situation, the hospital system acts as if they don't know what to do with you. You're treated as some anomaly, but you're a human being. You should be protected in

"Medical professionals will say they treat everybody the same, but that's the problem. They're treating everybody the same, but everybody's experience is not the same."

an environment like that.

Medical professionals will say they treat everybody the same, but that's the problem. They're treating everybody the same, but everybody's experience is not the same. Black women come into the healthcare system with our experiences that need to be acknowledged, and we need to be treated in such a way that recognizes that. We are experiencing historical harm; we're experiencing an inordinate level of stress because of racism. To not acknowledge that and to place the blame at our feet is one of the problems.

You face myriad challenges in your work, but is there something that is so rewarding or uplifting that it makes you continue forward in your purpose?

I do this work so proudly. I consider myself one of the most blessed people to have my passion and my vocation intersect at a place where real change is possible. I stand on the shoulders and follow in the footsteps of black women who have come before me, who have paved the way, who have set the bar for the California Black Women's Health Project. Our vision is a healthier future where black women are empowered to make choices, where there's equal access to health justice. That is who we are and that is what we aim to see. It makes me proud, and it gives me confidence to do this work and reminds me that it's been done before and that we will not stop.

What message do you wish to send to young black women who may not have resources or community, and who may feel alienated and underserved by our healthcare system?

Never go alone. This is difficult now because of Covid-19, when the healthcare system is restricting you from being accompanied by someone for appointments or emergency care. But we advocate for that because there is safety in numbers, and there is safety in more than one of you hearing the message. Both of you are able to speak up and say, "No, no. Explain that again," and "Why this?" You're making sure your 15-minute appointment doesn't turn into a five-minute appointment and that you actually receive the care you're supposed to receive.

The other thing I would say is, find your circle. Find your allies. That is part of the way we operate in our traditions. We are a communal people. Black women tend and befriend. We are a connected people, so isolation is dangerous to us. Avoid the kind of that circle of sisters you can trust.

What role does self-care play in black women's emotional or mental health? How does one inte-

grate it into their life more?

Black women are so accustomed to caring for others because that is what we do. It's rooted in our history in this country, and it's rooted even in our African ancestry. We are used to making sure everyone else is fine. But at the California Black Women's Health Project we tell women that you cannot pour from an empty cup. When the cup starts to dry, you're losing yourself. So fill your cup. Sometimes it can be candles and bubble baths, but for some of us that is not enough. The real level of self-care is getting your rest, looking after yourself. It's learning to breathe every day. Our breath is so shallow all the time, so take those deep, rich breaths. Take time to just sit and be still, and learn to use the word no.

There is pressure on us as we travel. But know our word, proverbially, is always there. Sometimes we have to go into our own sanctuaries, into our own closets, into our own spaces, find our own heads, and find a safe place to rest sometimes.

What can people do to support you in addition to donating?

People are always asking me if it's enough if they give. That's important, because organizations like ours are grossly underfunded. We are called to do way too much with way too little. However, in addition to the funding support, it's crucial for our allies to use their own systems and structures and the power around them to ensure that racism continues to be eradicated. Make sure you are not participating in inequities and disparities where you live and work. Use your power as much as you can to uplift another community and to speak out against problems.

Become an activist. That is something you can do, and it doesn't have to just be a financial investment. The ultimate goal is to eliminate the need for us to be in the streets, pushing and fighting. Eliminate the need for me to do that.

"Black women are so accustomed to caring for others because that is what we do. We are used to making sure everyone else is fine. But you cannot pour from an empty cup."



Five Emerging Transgender and Nonbinary Leaders to

Watch



This year for Transgender Awareness Week we celebrate five people working to give voice to the underheard, justice to the underserved—and laughter to us all

BY MARY EMILY O'HARA

This Friday marks the annual Trans Day of Remembrance, which since 1999 has memorialized members of the transgender community lost to violence and murder. Recent years have seen some LGBTQ leaders beginning to reorient the spirit of the day by referring to it as Trans Day of Resilience. Empowering and protecting transgender and gender nonconforming lives doesn't just mean honoring the dead, but also celebrating the humanity of trans people through their accomplishments and victories. The concept of resilience doesn't stop at survival; powerful and talented trans pioneers continue to rise to the top of their fields across industries, from arts and entertainment to politics and activism.

To celebrate trans resilience, *Playboy* is spotlighting five emerging voices that should be on your radar. Each of the non-binary and transgender leaders profiled here is not just changing the game, but also blazing a path for younger generations to follow.



Meredith Talusan (Photo by Albricia Tierre)

The Diplomat

Meredith Talusan, author
Pronouns: they/she

Though they are best known as an award-winning journalist, Meredith Talusan has a master's degree in fiction. Now living in the woodlands of a small town in upstate New York, Talusan is returning to that form and working on their first novel. Small-town life has been an interesting change of pace for Talusan, who previously worked in the Conde Nast building in Manhattan as executive editor at *Them*, the publishing giant's LGBTQ digital magazine. Forest life might prompt culture shock for some city expats, but for Talusan, who grew up on a farm in the Philippines, it's a respite. The biggest change, Talusan says, is getting used to conservative neighbors.

"In America, going to a rural area also means being in an area that's a lot more white and a lot more conservative, and encountering people who are Trump supporters on a regular basis," Talusan says. "Some people are like, 'You're fine,' but they don't like trans people in general. And there's something important about that, about being around people who get to know you as a person, so hopefully you're having an impact."

Talusan's first book, *Fairest*, came out in May. The well-reviewed memoir examines what it means to be "an outcast among outcasts" as a trans immigrant with albinism. It's with that kind of intersectional lens that Talusan looks forward to the next year. "I am worried that we would feel complacent in a Democratic administration," Talusan says. "It's very important for us to continue to advocate and be activists for our concerns."



Kayla Gore. (Photo by TC Caldwell)

The Champion

Kayla Gore, community organizer
Pronouns: she/her

Kayla Gore might be one of the busiest people in Tennessee. She's the Southern regional organizer at the Transgender Law Center, the lead plaintiff in a lawsuit challenging the state's policy against trans people changing the gender on their birth certificates, and the co-founder of My Sistah's House, a Memphis nonprofit that coordinates shelter services for trans people in need.

For much of the past year, Gore has been fund-raising to build a tiny-house community and introduce homeownership to the mostly Black transgender women the organization serves. So far, My Sistah's House has raised nearly two-thirds of its \$450,000 goal. Gore says the pandemic hit the community especially hard. "They were out of work, the unemployment system was jammed and a lot of people got evicted before the moratorium," she says. "We started to think, How can we avoid this happening again?"

Gore's work is essential. Things many people take for granted, like safe housing and accurate birth certificates, can be life-saving for Black trans women. "There have been at least 34 murders of transgender people this year," Gore says. "These are lives lost, and there's nobody really doing anything about it."



Kai Choyce. (Photo courtesy Kai Choyce)

The Trickster

Kai Choyce, comedian

Pronouns: he/him

With the pandemic and resulting closure of live venues, it hasn't exactly been the easiest year for stand-up comedians. Kai Choyce may be the exception. The rising funnyman carved out some major 2020 highlights, thanks to some really good Covid jokes. Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson shared one of them with his 15 million Twitter followers, and the rest went into Choyce's upcoming online quarantine special, *Coronation*.

What's the funniest thing to come out of the pandemic so far? "Definitely the week when a bunch of monkeys escaped a lab with samples of Covid, and it was somehow just a blip in the news cycle for 24 hours," he says. Choyce is preparing for another year of nightmares like "Covid-20" and "stronger, faster murder hornets." The pandemic has been hard on everyone, but pain is what feeds good comedy. "I have no shortage of worries," Choyce says. "It's what keeps me motivated to get shit done."

Although comedy has traditionally been an old (white, cis-gender) boy's club, trans visibility in general has been growing—making it easier to "just create your own lane," Choyce says. He's been doing just that, in part through his popular weekly podcast, *Women Who Kill*, where guests discuss a different "murderer who happens to be a lady" each episode. And, of course, in part by being hella funny on the internet.



Taylor Small. (Photo by James Buck)

The Upstart

Taylor Small, Vermont state legislator

Pronouns: she/her

Four years ago, Taylor Small had just graduated from college. By day, she was running the health and wellness program at the Pride Center of Vermont; by night, she performed as local drag sensation Nikki Champagne. She'd considered a career in politics, but imagined it would come later in life. Fast forward to November 3, when Small became not only the first transgender person elected to Vermont's state legislature, but also one of the youngest state legislators in the nation, at just 26 years old.

"What is most exhilarating is the impact I'm hearing from young people, including young trans and gender nonconforming youth," Small says. "[They] are saying, 'Not only do I see a future for myself after years of discrimination, but I also see a path forward for myself into elected office.'"

Being a first-time candidate campaigning during a global pandemic was "like building a plane while flying it," Small says. Now that she's won a literal seat at the table, Small is focused on ensuring health care access for all—especially in light of the Supreme Court's current review of the Affordable Care Act.

"We have seen our communities here in Vermont losing their jobs and their access to health insurance," Small says. "Health care is a human right and should not just be a privilege."



Kit Yan, (Photo by Jess X. Snow)

The Scribe

Kit Yan, playwright and poet

Pronouns: they/he/she

This was supposed to be a big year for Kit Yan and their writing partner, Melissa Li. The two playwrights had debuted their musical, *Interstate*, on March 6 to rave reviews and sold-out houses. But after only about eight performances, the theater world shut down completely thanks to coronavirus. “Our next production was supposed to be in L.A.,” hoping for a commercial path toward Broadway, Yan says. Instead, Yan’s career—largely dependent upon live performance venues and travel—came to a sudden halt.

But the unexpected break has allowed Yan to focus on their own humanity outside the nonstop work that theater demands. “I might get a hysterectomy—a gender-confirming surgery—during the interim, and it wasn’t something I would have been able to do if we’d still gone full-speed ahead,” Yan says.

They’ve also been reconnecting with the roots of their commitment to trans storytelling. All Yan’s plays and musicals feature transgender characters and actors.

“Putting trans stories and trans people on stage humanizes the trans experience in different ways than TV and film,” they say. “When you’re in a physical space watching a live performance, watching trans people speak, sitting among queer and trans people—it’s a singular experience.”

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